

**Minutes of
Special Meeting of the Governing Board
For Tracy Unified School District
Held on Tuesday, October 20, 2020**

As per Executive Order N-29-20 from Governor Newsom, the Tracy Unified School District Board of Education meetings moved to a virtual/teleconferencing environment using Microsoft Teams. The Governor's executive order on March 12, 2020, waived the requirement for a majority of board members to physically participate in a public board meeting at the same location.

7:00 PM: 1. President Pekari called the meeting to order.

Roll Call: 2. Board: S. Abercrombie, A. Alexander, J. Costa, S. Kaur, B. Pekari, J. Silcox, L. Souza
Staff: B. Stephens, R. Pecot, T. Jalique, J. Stocking, B. Etcheverry

7:00 PM 3. President Pekari called the Tracy Unified School District Board of Education to order and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Trustee Abercrombie read a statement which apologized to citizens and teachers who felt their voices were not heard at the last board meeting. The vote was moved ahead of hearing of delegations. He's heard several comments from the community that it gave the impression that we were not interested. He apologized for giving that impression. They have received numerous emails and comments. This year has been extremely difficult and stressful for a lot of people. As board members we know we will face criticism and complaints comes with job. We did not sign up for our families to be harassed or attacked. We need to come together during these challenging times. He is asking everyone to do some soul searching and reflect on behaviors. Are we setting the example for our children? The Board is faced with difficult decisions. It is no win situation. Whatever we decide we will be challenged. Please do not involve the board's families and kids.

Hearing of Delegations 4. In accordance with Board Bylaw 9232, we are limited to 20 minutes on one topic. We will read the best representation of the comments that have come in. All comments have been sent electronically to all of the trustees.

Gia Caguit: Please do not reopen schools at least two weeks after the new year. It is unsafe! Keep children and teachers safe! Or keep the option of distance learning for those who are afraid for their children to go back. Independent study should be off the table.

Anna Neves: I believe that our kids not being in school for over six months now it's doing more harm to them then good both develop mentally and emotionally and I'm concerned the effects outweigh the pandemic.

Scott Arbogast: We believe that going back to school now under a hybrid model would not be in the best interests of student, staff, and community. Here are the reasons why:• Disrupting distance learning in the middle of a quarter/semester will not help students, especially high

school students who are so close to finals. • A routine has been established; why disrupt this now when we just learned a new way of teaching and learning. • Not having seen a schedule, we don't know how long periods would be, but if we are in school until 11:30 to 12:30 periods for middle and high school will be shorter than what we do online now. • Trying to distance students in passing times will be near impossible at the middle and high school. • At this time in the year where so many people may still be getting together for friend and family celebrations with Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas the spread will most definitely become great, right when we are opening. • We know that kids need to be back in school, but many are fearful that they will spread the virus and get their parents or grandparents sick.

Jennifer Hernandez: I'd like to share my support for the boards decision to reopen schools. While I understand the terms and timing does not meet everyone's needs I do believe it is a step in the right direction to return kids to class. While I am less concerned with my elementary school returning back to school I do feel it is essential for high school kids to finish the year physically in class. It may be better to revise your current plan to possibly put off starting until after this semester is finished to cause less disruption to their current studies. My kids have been told by some of their teachers that they will not return if school resumes in person. This would be detrimental to these kids having less than 2 months left before finals. Also to avoid all extra exposure over the holidays with increased family gathers; put off starting until after New Year. I'm supportive either way. But as a compromise I propose a January start with hopes that will include full day instruction.

Carla Waluck: Thank you for trying to find the best solution that will accommodate everyone. All while putting yourselves in danger by working during a pandemic. I know that you can't make everyone happy and the solution that you voted on is what's best for everyone. I also want to apologize to you on behalf of the parents of the students in this school district. Shame on us. You are the village that helps raise our children. We have been acting like spoiled, privileged kids by demanding you accommodate each individual instead of understanding and accepting your decision for what's best for the whole of the district. It's very difficult to have a composed head and be reasonable when everyone is letting fear guide their actions. My daughter and other parents who have children going back to school are thrilled and can't wait to attend. I'm sorry for all the rudeness and verbal attacks you have suffered. This is not who we are as a community. Please know that the actions of the few who happen to be the loudest are not the wishes of everyone. If you decide to push back the reopening till later in the year, we will be considerably upset but we will cope. Because that's what adults do. Thank you for reading my words.

Charlotte Gavero: So many families cannot risk even the slightest exposure to this virus including my family and personal life and even my close friends. This is such short notice, if you think this out today for a for sure answer that gives families less than two weeks to prepare.

Instead of 5 days at school or actual classes, we will only have two while the other 3 days are asynchronous which is so horrible. Families, students, and teachers didn't get ANY say in this decision. Which is completely unfair and selfish. Our only other option to stay in online school is charter, aka removal of AP classes, programs, etc. Why are you guys making us choose between education and our health?

Jeanelle Howard: I am a parent and active volunteer at George Kelly Elementary School. I have done some polling of my own. Regarding the reopening of schools. I want you to know that although the teachers and parents that want the kids back, full time if possible are quieter than the ones who want to stay at home and still have all the benefits folks we are here and we are many. I am hearing that some of the confusion comes from county requirements. I realize you have no control over that. But, if you are reconsidering because of threats and immature "backlash" new 20th century bully, please don't. Many of us parents and teachers want the kids in school with their peers and the teachers they trust. They need the interaction and are suffering socially without it. This is a difficult road to navigate but despite politics and planned protests, schools were developed to give kids the educations they need and deserve. This pandemic should not be the reason to end the education system as we know it. There will be frustration and unrest either way. That's life. We (as I speak for many) want you to know we want them back in school ASAP.

Eden Matelski: Families NEED viable options. Let those who want to return to campus, return. Let those who want to continue distance learning, continue distance learning. Let families decide what's best for THEIR children. Students, families, and STAFF need viable options. One path isn't best for everyone. Give us options and let US choose! Thank you.

Shari Bunton: I have seen the agenda for the special called Board Meeting and it is somewhat vague. Is it to vote on the safety protocols to put in place for opening school again. Or- I am concerned that there may be a revote tonight. I am one of those people that strongly believes our children need to be back in school, as a teacher and a parent. Our children are NOT thriving. Their education is suffering. They will not be prepared for the rest of their schooling and at the rate we are going, next year will be even more difficult than this year. How would it be right to revote when none of us have been asked our thoughts in an official manner? Perhaps basing this on the loudness of the people who didn't get what they wanted in the first vote? There are many others who share my opinion, we just aren't the "squeaky wheels". Just my humble opinion....and I could be completely wrong as to what tonight's meeting is about. But the thought of more months of our current situation has me very upset and discouraged. As a teacher I have not really been asked how I am faring in all of this. The answer is: I am constantly exhausted and discouraged about what is most likely happening on the other end of the screen while I teach. My own children get bored and distracted and don't know what they are supposed to be doing half the time-either due

to poor connection, TEAMS issues, or just plain being sick of sitting there. I am having to spend my time after doing my job as a teacher making sure that the work they are turning in looks somewhat like what I think their teacher might want (because I don't even care about A's at this point.) And I cannot yet figure out how to actually have a weekend where I don't do schoolwork, let alone figure out how I could possibly get away with my family and go somewhere to relax. I sincerely hope I don't have to tell my children and students that our district "changed their minds". What kind of message does that send them? I know all of this is extremely difficult and decisions are hard. I'm asking for you all to please stick with what was done and keep moving forward for our students and we teachers that already have dug in our heels and begun the preparations needed for hybrid.

David Dequit: TUSD should not reopen schools on November 2. The US is currently seeing a rise in Covid-19 cases. Health experts predict that this surge of infections will worsen with the colder weather and flu season. It is expected that the next 6 to 12 weeks will be the darkest days of this pandemic with up to 2,500 deaths per day. It would be wiser to reopen schools early next year when a vaccine is available and the weather is warmer. Reopening schools now will unnecessarily put students, teachers, and families at a higher risk of contracting Covid-19. Students will be subjected to further educational disruptions, if schools were to reopen and then close again, especially with the upcoming Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year holidays.

Rosa Montoya: Please let the children go back to school, we agree 100% with the decision made last meeting. An option was made available to those who don't want to let their children go back to i person learning. We can't keep our children at home forever, these people who disagree are putting upcoming holidays as excuses and then what when January comes around what will be next? You will never please everyone but I feel this is what's best for them, they've been out of school way to long.

Cythina Hudak: I am against sending my child back to Tracy High on November 3. With changing to hybrid they will only get two days of teacher instruction instead of five days like now. Seems like no advantage to going back. Only less education, stress on the students and risk of Covid. I will be voting against several of you that voted yes on this if this is not rectified tonight. Thank you.

Rachel Salazar: For the children who want to go back to school can we just get them covid tested prior to the school re opening? And then a month later re test and see how everything is going? My child really wants to be back in school. And I feel like this a reasonable idea, for the parents of children who would rather be in a school setting.

Kavita Taylor: First, I would like to say how grateful I am for all the hard work TUSD has done and the countless hours they have put into distance learning and planning on how to re-open our schools safely! I also want to express how much I believe our schools should re-open. I

feel we need to start getting back to some type of normalcy. If we keep delaying it, it will just get worse. Right now is a good time to open, as it can be thought of a 'Trial Period', to see how things go. Slowly, we can get back to on-campus, full time. I would also like to suggest an idea, which you may or may not have considered. Since a lot of parents seem upset about the kids going less hours and having less instruction time, I am wondering if there would be a way to do half the kids on campus, their respective days, and then on Wednesday, they would have a Teams day. Same as they do Wednesday, now, with DL. Thank you for considering each side of this coin. Whatever decision is made, please know you all have my full support.

Sabrina Hunter: We are in a national emergency and have been since March, 2020. Over 200,000 Americans have died of Corona Virus. School openings have proven to spread the virus and close the schools down again soon after. Please make the smart decision and postpone the reopening of schools. Better yet, do not force your philosophy on parents. When I gave birth to my child it became very clear that I was in charge of making decisions that were in her best interest. TUSD is forcing this decision on me and not giving me a choice by giving me 2 options 1) hybrid or 2) online charter school. I do not want to be forced to unenroll my child from her school because she likes it there. As a parent I should have the option to continue distance learning AT THAT SCHOOL if I want to without any further politics. I am disgusted with the District and its Leaders for putting me in this position and not giving me a choice. Do not force your philosophy on parents. Each family has a different situation. Offer 3 options if you have to open up the school 1) hybrid 2) distance learning at the SAME SCHOOL or 3) charter online school.

Joshua Wood: Can the board explain why the option to remain in distance learning until the end of the semester (Dec. 18th) wasn't considered? This option would have given families enough time to try and make arrangements to accommodate the Hybrid schedule. Instead we were given 3 days to pick between Hybrid or leaving TSUD and entering the charter program. All with no solid information on the hybrid schedule, how you are going to keep the kids safe or any real plan for that matter. All of which could have made the families feel safe about the reopening of the schools. We deserve a plan in place well in advance of returning to school.

Ashleigh Hewey: What is the reason for students having to give up on great educational opportunities, IB, AP AG, leadership, etc.) because they decide to go through the charter school? Some kids have been committed and now that a pandemic has altered the education path, the educational opportunities should not be affected since it's out of all our control. Are there any other ways that students that have been enrolled in the programs, can still acquire these opportunities?

Victoria Klug: I am a teacher in Tracy. We want to come back to school. We want to come back when it is safe. Why is it not safe now? CA is

trending well cautiously. One reason we are doing well is because our schools have not all opened up, or opened up fully. If we open now, we are doing the same thing we did in May when our numbers started looking good. Flu season is also predominant in the next two months. Students and teachers have a rhythm going. What is the point of disrupting it now, with no solid plan in place? The only option that didn't need a plan was Option 1. Option 2 does not have a substantive plan yet. I am not blaming the district. They are under pressure too, and have a lot on their plates. I am immensely grateful that the district chose to start the year with distance learning. That decision has allowed me to see my family, and keep all of us safe and healthy. Going back now would mean I don't see my family for the holidays, which breaks my heart, as I live alone and would have to isolate by myself for the next two months to make sure I don't infect them. Teachers are working their butts off. Right now we have report cards to complete and conferences to hold, all in addition to trying to get everything ready for a possible return in two weeks. This is stressful and exhausting, and we have a life outside of teaching also. Anyone who thinks teachers don't have enough on their plate; please, come spend a day or a week with us. You will see that NONE of this is easy, and we are doing our best. Please, revote to continue Option 1, and give the district time to create a well-thought out, supportive hybrid plan that will ensure the safety of ALL who will be affected. Thank you.

Pamela Mears: I would like to begin this letter with I do not envy you in this decision making process. There are a lot of opinions and a lot of emotions involved. I am writing this letter because I felt that my child was left out in the decision to return children back to campus. My child is a student on transfer to an out of zone school for a special diploma pathway, the Performing Arts Magnet. She is required specific coursework and a set level of performance in order to maintain that status. She is also taking advanced coursework with hopes to obtain an IB certificate. Her ultimate goal is to attend a University of California college. She is currently on a path to make that her reality. Although she would prefer to be onsite and receive in-person learning, she also has an autoimmune condition. Also, she lives with both parents that are high risk. She is an outgoing person and has not lived boxed up at home. However, her decisions have been calculated according to risk factors. Sitting in an enclosed space with 15 or so students, all within 3-4 feet of one another for more than 15 minutes, even while masked, is not wise in her high risk group. Therefore, our only option is to keep distant learning. The survey that came out to parents gave us two options: Return to hybrid learning or transfer to the new charter school. Sadly, the charter school will not allow her to continue on her educational pathway and hurts her academically. Therefore, I was forced to select return to hybrid learning. I am asking from deep in my being that you will reconsider the two options provided. Please work with the teachers, their unions, and the academic programs to find a way to accommodate these students. I know that she is not alone in this matter. We need a third option to keep students distant learning and in their special programs – IB, Ag Science, Performing Arts, Science and Engineering,

Medical and Health Services, ROTC, etc. I do not want to have us let these students down.

This gives a representation of comments received. All board members received all of the comments that were submitted and have read them. We appreciate your input.

Action Items:

5.1

Administrative & Business Services:

5.1.1

Reconsider Previously Approved Reopening Plan

Superintendent, Dr. Brian Stephens, presented a power point regarding the reopening plan. He was out of the office for the past 3 weeks as he received a positive COVID test on the East coast. He apologized that his accessibility was limited. He reviewed the points to consider and noted that he is extremely sensitive to the issues that people have raised. Distance Learning is not a replacement for in person instruction. It is not as effective as in-person instruction. We are using Distance Learning at the moment because of COVID 19 and he is proud of the work that we have done. He does believe that we should return to in-person as soon as it is safe for students and staff. Students are suffering with Distance Learning, especially younger students with their technology skills. Faculty and staff have done a superb job. He cannot say enough about the work everyone has done and can be proud of. Nationally, the COVID cases are rising. In our county, the numbers have improved. He showed a national chart and a county chart of the cases. We need to pay attention to the numbers. We are going in the opposition direction of our nation. The positivity rate was below 3% and the nation is struggling.

He reviewed some points that he would like to recommend to the board:

1. District should make a commitment to provide in-person instruction as soon as it is possible to do so safely as advised by the San Joaquin County Public Health Department.
2. Remain in Distance Learning for the remainder of the first semester. This would serve two purposes:
 - a. Reduce disruption to students and their academic programs.
 - b. Provide additional time to staff to execute a smooth re-opening of our schools for the benefit of students and staff.
3. Begin plans to move towards hybrid learning model starting January 4, 2021
4. TUSD should continue its' work to begin small cohort instruction for Pre-3 SDC classes.
5. Board report at every meeting regarding COVID numbers in our county. Continue to closely monitor data for "second wave" or spike in COVID numbers.

6. Continue to work closely with the Department of Public Health with the intent to follow their guidelines moving forward.

He is confident that we could have opened November 2nd, however, it does not make sense to disrupt mid-semester. We are talking about 6 weeks. We need to keep that in mind. We need to do this in a safe manner with the provided guidelines by local and state health departments. He believes that TUSD should continue small cohorts for pre-K to 3rd grade SDC students. These are our highest needs students. Next week we will start to have a board report at every meeting by Julianna Stocking that will review the COVID numbers in our county. This way we can all see the numbers in our county and look for spikes or a second waive. If those happen, it will alternate what we need to do. We must continue to work closely with the Department of Public Health and follow their guidelines moving forward. We closed last spring and told staff and community that we would follow the guidelines of public health. They said we can now bring students back. He agrees but not until January 4th of 2021. Dr. Park at San Joaquin County Public Health has done a superb job. She has shown strong leadership and we shall continue to follow her guidelines and work closely with them.

The board then discussed and asked questions. Currently, there is no restriction to go back 100% as long as we are in the red tier as a county. We have the discretion to make that decision. Dr. Stephens understands that that would be the easiest thing to do, but people are not ready for that. Trustee Costa stated that she wanted to students back sooner, however, this will be less disruptive to our high school students. She understands that. She does have an issue with some of the emails that were read because they do not take the time to understand what the hybrid really means. Ms. Stocking described the hybrid as 2 days of in-person learning and 3 days of Distance Learning. The questions about bell schedules will hopefully be answered soon. They are currently having discussions with the union on that. Once decided, we will send out communication regarding bell schedules. Also, many people are stating that we do not have a plan. There is a plan and it is on the District website COVID page. Dr. Stephens commented that the District Safety Plan has also been on the webpage and approved by the state and public health. School site safety plans have been worked on since summer. They are currently being modified and submitted today for review. Once finalized we will post all of them on the COVID page. Administrators have worked on these plans for months. Today was a safety forum for our certificated staff and on Thursday we are having a similar presentation for classified employees. We will be doing the same thing with our parents. We are working hard to get information out. A lot of community and both bargaining groups feel good about where we are at. Trustee Costa stated for those not aware, there are 9 other districts that have opened or have plans to open in November. There will always be people unhappy, but we are following the direction of our county. We would never go beyond what they would allow us to do. Trustee Silcox stated that he is not a medical expert but refers to those that are smarter than him. He stands by his vote to open as soon

as possible, but also understands the predicament seniors are in especially for IB students. He understands the need for the delay to the semester break and has compassion for that. We need to be crystal clear that we are following the guidelines provided to us by public health and no one else. Trustee Pekari commented on various statistics that he had heard of incases in ICU and that it shows that we need to be prepared. Also, that since Jefferson District feeds into TUSD he is glad we are waiting until January too. Trustee Silcox commented that that proves his point that the board needs to listen to one source. This is part of the issue we are struggling with as a board. Trustee Kaur agreed that we need to open or close based on county public health, not this doctor or that doctor. Right now it is a good decision to bring students back in January and at that point we may have to review and look at numbers again. Trustee Costa agreed that we should follow the guidelines of county public health. Trustee Souza commented that as of today, the California website says that schools may reopen fully with in-person instruction as well as the San Joaquin Public Health. We would not put children in jeopardy without the county saying it was ok to do so. We want to come to a conclusion that works best. Dr. Stephens We have been planning and will move ahead if the board adopts his proposal. We will follow their guidelines on a consistent basis, as we have been doing since March. Trustee Pekari commented that we are ready and can up and running with all grades. Dr. Stephens responded that we can be, but that is not his recommendation. We need to do what public health is saying. We also need to listen to teachers and classified. We want to make sure that everyone is feeling safe and moving forward in a productive way. The district has a plan and it is on the website and has been approved and voted on by the county and state. We work closely with TEA and leadership to negotiate their schedules. Ms. Stocking reviewed the steps to follow if we have a positive case. We are being extremely cautious and following the guidelines of our county. We have letters ready to go, we have contact log reports, we have a team designated at each site and district level and will work strategically together. In addition to our plan, Dr. Pecot and Dr. Petty have been working with our school site administrators. They will also be providing additional information to each of their families at their sites. Trustee Pekari will not be on the board in January, but expects the board members will be prepared to make decisions based on public health. Trustee Souza wants kids back in school and we will do so following the San Joaquin County Public Health. She believes there is a mental health crisis. She will compromise and go with Dr. Stephens recommendation to wait until January 4th if public health is approving that.

Action: Moved by Souza to approve all 6 points of Dr. Stephen's recommendations. Seconded by Alexander. **Vote:** Yes-7; No-0.

Board Reports:

Trustee Silcox passed. Trustee Abercrombie passed. Trustee Kaur passed. Trustee Souza passed. Trustee Alexander hopes that the public understands the difficulty in making this decision. Trustee Costa passed. Trustee Pekari commented that we are in this together and are doing the best we can.

**Superintendent
Report:**

Dr. Stephens hopes everyone appreciates the tremendous amount of work the staff has done to get to this point. He is fortunate to have the district administration, site administration, teachers and classified all working together. He acknowledges everyone's efforts have been amazing. He further stated that he has received a tremendous amount of emails some of which were inappropriate and have attacked people. He believes that our board members are good people. They are kind, caring and generous. You may disagree with their decision but as a community in Tracy we should lead by example and have meaningful discussions. After a disagreement we should walk away and have respect for each other. That is leadership.

Adjourn: 8:20

Clerk

Date