



Board of Directors, Regular Meeting Minutes, Tuesday, November 24, 2020  
RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 400  
BENTON COUNTY, RICHLAND, WASHINGTON

The Board of Directors of Richland School District No. 400 met for a regular meeting Tuesday, November 24, 2020, at 6:00 P.M. via Zoom, Richland, Washington. School Board President Rick Jansons presided. Board members present: Heather Cleary, Kari Williams, Jill Oldson, and Ken Gosney.

The Board meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (Personnel, Legal)**

The Board adjourned to executive session at 6:00 P.M. to discuss qualifications of an applicant for employment or review of performance of an employee (final actions must be taken in public and discussions affecting employees generally must be held in public) 42.30.110 (1) (g), and discussion with legal counsel, of enforcement actions, litigation or potential litigation, if public discussion might result in an adverse legal or financial consequence. (Does not permit an executive session solely because attorney is present.) 42.30.110 (1) (i). The executive session was projected to last thirty minutes, with no action expected. Executive session ended at 6:30 P.M.

The Board returned to the regular meeting at 6:33 P.M. Mr. Jansons explained the Open Public Meetings Act restriction order was recently extended by the Governor.

**1.0 CALL TO ORDER**

**1.1 Pledge of Allegiance**

**1.2 Roll Call -All Here**

**1.3 Approval of Minutes (November 10, 2020; November 17, 2020)**

It was moved by Kari Williams and seconded by Ken Gosney that –

THE BOARD APPROVE MEETING MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 10, 2020 AND NOVEMBER 17, 2020.

Vote: Cleary, yes; Oldson, yes; Williams, yes; Gosney, yes; and Jansons, yes.

Motion was approved.

**1.4 Recognitions**

Dr. Redinger introduced Dr. Tracy Blankenship, Executive Director of Special Education, who announced it was National School Psychologist Week November 9-13, 2020. Rachel Carr, School Psychologist, honored Communities in Schools Benton Franklin (CISBF) with the Community Partner Award. CISBF works alongside school employees to connect families with services, provide behavioral support, make home visits and play a critical role in our schools. Brenda Gonzalez, CISBF, stated they were honored to receive the award. Dr. Redinger thanked the School Psychologist and CISBF for their work in the District.

## **2.0 BUSINESS**

### **2.1.1 Metric/Data-Benton Franklin Health District/State**

Mike Hansen, Deputy Superintendent, reported data from Benton Franklin Health District (BFHD), State of Washington Department of Health (DOH), and the COVID Now site. The BFHD site reported 711 cases per 100,000 population over a 14-day period. He reported case rates of children ages 5-14 as 397 cases per 100,000 over 14 days and ages 15-19 as 609 cases per 100,000 over 14 days. Mr. Hansen advised the number of cases reported at the meeting just two weeks ago was 296 per 100,000 over 14 days, which shows the tremendous increase in a short period of time. We are not seeing tracing back to show schools are causing cases, just a tremendous increase in cases. The District has 300 entries in the COVID tracking document (students/staff having to isolate) with 57 staff and students testing positive.

The DOH site lists 299 cases per 100,00 over 14 days but is only updated to November 12, 2020. Mr. Hansen also shared a variety of data from the America COVID Now website. Dr. Redinger shared school staff members will hopefully be a priority (after medical staff) to receive the vaccine when it becomes available.

### **2.1.2 Update Pre-K-5 Start**

Brian Moore, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education, reported the daily attendance rate is currently 82%, while pre-COVID rate was 90-95%. He advised more people are sick with prolonged absences related to quarantine recommendations. Mr. Moore also reported the number of families opting not to return to in-person instruction continues to grow daily, with 562 students choosing the Continuous Distance Learning (CDL) model due to increasing COVID numbers in the region. There are also 365 students attending Richland Virtual School (RVS) where students will stay in online learning for the entire year.

Tony Howard, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, shared recent information showing the ability to find substitute teachers to fill positions while staff members are quarantined for extended periods of time is increasingly difficult with the return of additional students in the elementary schools. More than 30 classrooms have been collapsed with students being redistributed which is detrimental to teacher/student relationships. Budget capacity to recruit new substitutes was allowed in September, but the supply has not kept up with the demand. The gap for finding paraeducator substitutes is even greater. He explained some creative ways the District is using para substitutes but with additional costs. Mr. Howard shared using specialists as classroom teachers or bringing in long-term substitutes doesn't work well. Dr. Redinger reported nurses are taxed right now, principals are filling in, para positions are going unfilled, and she is worried that this issue is going to escalate in the next several months.

Board discussion followed including:

- Class size-decrease with students moving from hybrid in-person to CDL
- Attendance-decrease from 90-95% to 82%
- Substitutes-prolonged absences have become the challenge-many for quarantine periods (14 days)

Ms. Williams suggested requiring a short-term commitment from families to slow this rapid shift. Mr. Howard reported, on the staff side, it is equally as complicated, since we are trying to protect the relationships with families and staff. She also suggested live streaming for those unable to

attend in person. Dr. Buchholz, RVS, has been researching this and found it to be more difficult at the elementary level.

Mr. Jansons advised he wanted to delay the return of 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders earlier. He feels it is time to pull back so the District can adequately staff students that are in school and decrease mobility.

Dr. Redinger advised the return of Special Education students, Pre-K-2, and tutoring at risk secondary students has gone well. The problem is the local numbers have greatly increased with many having to quarantine. Dr. Person, BFHD, has recommended that we keep K-12 Special Education students and secondary tutoring groups, but it may behoove us to pull back on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Superintendent Redinger stated she saw a huge change when 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders were brought back and is not seeing relief in the near future. Her goal is to have all students back in the classroom as soon as possible.

Mr. Gosney questioned the sustainability of the current students in hybrid in-person. Dr. Redinger advised given the trajectory and lack of substitutes, it will be hard to maintain quality instruction. She worried it will not be the quality we want. She feels the District could maintain K-3 students with substitutes available.

Ms. Cleary advised all Board members want students back in school and employees have worked hard in a difficult situation. Board members are receiving daily emails from both those who want students to return and those who want to continue online. She is alarmed that area numbers have greatly increased recently. The holidays will surely add to the spread and she feels the District needs to pull back on in-person learning.

Mr. Jansons agreed and stated Dr. Person suggested a number of 200/100,000 for 14 days might be acceptable. Benton County is at 600/100,000 currently. He feels we should continue Pre-K-2 and pull back on 3-5 at this time. He feels we can continue secondary tutoring as long as the District can support it.

Mr. Gosney stated decisions since joining the Board have been very difficult. He also feels the District should continue with Special Education students and small groups of secondary students furthest from educational justice.

Ms. Williams is concerned about the quality of education. Substitutes are great but cannot replace the classroom teacher. She is not in favor of scaling back but is concerned about students and what they are learning. She urged that 3<sup>rd</sup> graders stay in-person since deficiencies at the third-grade level are difficult to overcome.

Ms. Oldson stated she did not want to scale back, but also doesn't want to break the system with teachers, principals, administrators or families. Her biggest concern is to minimize the learning loss. She feels it is in the best interest to scale back the return of 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students.

It was moved by Jill Oldson and seconded by Rick Jansons that –

THAT THE BOARD APPROVE MOVING 4<sup>TH</sup> AND 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENTS BACK TO DISTANCE LEARNING WITH THE CAVEAT OF DETERMINING WHICH OF THOSE

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**STUDENTS MAY NEED TUTORING SUPPORT (THOSE FURTHEST FROM ACADEMIC JUSTICE).**

Ms. Oldson stated the system is becoming too taxed. The District can accommodate the substitute demand by keeping K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in person, while moving 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students to distance learning.

Mr. Gosney stated his main concern is that the District can't continue to provide the education needed. If returning 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students back to online will better accommodate learning, he doesn't like it, but will vote for that.

Ms. Cleary advised she doesn't like it either but feels if we limit in-person learning to K-2, the District could get students back sooner.

Mr. Jansons echoed both Mr. Gosney and Ms. Cleary. He feels keeping K-3 in person is doable, but he doesn't see the numbers going down, especially with the holidays ahead.

Superintendent Redinger clarified the District could make some very distasteful decisions such as moving all specialists into classrooms but feels this could cause more damage in the long run.

Ms. Oldson asked to amend the motion adding Pre-K students that are already in attendance.

Ms. Williams would like administrators to recruit more substitutes and investigate live streaming options.

Vote: Gosney, yes; Oldson, yes; Williams, no; Cleary, yes; and Jansons, yes.  
Motion was approved.

Dr. Redinger thanked the Board and stated Mr. Howard is already working on recruiting substitutes. Ms. Oldson asked when 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students should return to online classes. Mr. Moore stated it would make sense to start on Monday, November 30, 2020. Ty Beaver, Communications Director, will draft a message to go out to parents tomorrow.

### **2.1.3 Richland Virtual School (RVS) Update**

Dr. Redinger stated this report was requested by Board members and she feels RVS has the potential to be the best in the nation. Dr. Jesse Buchholz was hired in July as the Director of Online Learning with the goal of establishing this brand-new school. Dr. Redinger introduced Andre Hargunani who was selected as the new principal in late September. Mr. Hargunani commended Dr. Buchholz for creating this school in just a few months. He shared results of recent RVS teacher and family surveys including:

Going well:

- flexible schedules, consistency, good staff collaboration, good student engagement-students taking control of their learning, first club-Math Team (more to come)

Challenges:

- communication with some families, technology (improving), specialist instruction from home schools-navigating between the two, social emotional piece, specific curriculum for

online instruction, influx of new students, special education services (Special Education department helping to coordinate these services from 29 case managers at the home schools)

Mr. Hargunani explained the RVS leadership team is starting to develop a new student orientation/family onboarding plan to bring the various teacher efforts together into a more centralized plan. A design team is being formed to collaboratively plan the next iteration of RVS. Members on our Virtual Leadership Team (VLT) will participate, along with a wide representation of stakeholders including parents, students, district support staff, and community partners. The administrators from Three Rivers HomeLink, River's Edge High School, and Richland Virtual School (RVS) have started meeting regularly as a Professional Learning Community (PLC). Now that the District has three Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) schools, the administrators will collaborate on clearly defining the role of each school and how each school will strengthen the District's ALE offerings.

Board discussion followed including:

- Class size concern, especially Kindergarten
- Creating an orientation video
- Need to maintain partnership with home schools
- Board previously approved additional resources for RVS
- Need for more specific online curriculum

Dr. Redinger advised normally starting a school takes a year and thanked all for making this program successful. We are now needing to plan for long-term budgeting, she also explained the difficulty with hiring special education teachers and considering least restrictive environment guidelines. She thanked all for their hard work.

#### **2.1.4 Secondary (Grades 6-12) Option Update**

Todd Baddley, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education, reported administrators, union leadership and District staff worked June through August researching a variety of hybrid schedule options. This team looked at benefits and challenges while ensuring students could meet their graduation requirements and the components of their High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP). Budget, staffing capacity, and transportation also were considered. He reported, since the last Board meeting, additional outside district schedule options were explored. Research found those districts are currently running partial day remote learning schedules. Partial day onsite schedule options for Richland secondary schools are not currently feasible due to transportation limitations.

Mr. Baddley shared a plan that will easily flex from January to June, whether the District is hybrid, remote, or in-person. Both in-person and remote plans include two days of live instruction per week. This involves some live streaming options which will take some time to order equipment and professional development for staff. Student schedules will consist of six periods with three hours of computer time daily with options to continue online if desired. This schedule will also accommodate students' HSBP as well as Running Start and Tri Tech students. Good conversations have begun with bargaining group leadership. Mr. Baddley asked for Board approval to finalize details of the plan and order additional technology.

Mr. Gosney stated if the Board set a date for secondary students to return at the semester break and community COVID data did not allow this return, this plan would allow the flex between online and

hybrid. All classes and times would stay the same. This would also allow a full comeback if possible. The flexibility sounds excellent.

Ms. Williams likes the flexibility of students to move from remote to in-person instruction. She shared concern that other districts are providing more instruction time. Mr. Baddley shared having students on a computer for 5-6 hours is not recommended.

Ms. Oldson also supports the six period A/B schedule and feels both students and teachers have consistency. It also allows students who need more help to access teachers during “office hours”. Mr. Baddley reported many teachers are also volunteering to tutor students.

Ms. Cleary likes the continuity and encouraged administration to continue planning for this option. Mr. Jansons asked for a motion to give administrators and secondary principals the ability to continue developing the master schedule with the six period-A/B schedule.

It was moved by Ken Gosney and seconded by Heather Cleary that -

THE BOARD APPROVE THE PLAN AS PRESENTED (HYBRID A/B SCHEDULE - TWO DAYS PER STUDENT GROUP ALTERNATING IN-PERSON, ONE DAY ALL STUDENTS IN REMOTE LEARNING) WITH THE GOAL OF BRINGING SECONDARY STUDENTS BACK AT THE SEMESTER.

Discussion: Mr. Gosney would like to set the date at semester with the understanding that the date could change. Mr. Jansons asked if a date was needed in the motion. Ms. Cleary suggested adding “the intent is to come back at semester”. Mr. Gosney felt a date is needed to allow teachers to plan. If we get to that date and it is decided to stay remote, then we can adjust.

Vote: Gosney, yes; Oldson, yes; Williams, yes; Cleary, yes; and Jansons, yes.  
Motion was approved.

### **3.0 COMMUNICATIONS**

#### **3.1 Requests and Comments by Visitors (20-minute time limit)**

Kristen shared her concern with her child’s report card and the lack of grades for several classes. She feels her student is missing out on education she is legally entitled to.

Emma Lukovici-is a member of the student equity committee and feels the Board is not doing enough for student awareness. She would like to see a student representative on the Board. She also suggested a student Town Hall to hear student voices.

Sara Allington asked when is enough, enough? She suggested teachers zoom so students can participate remotely.

Sarah asked that the Board consider what is in the best interest of our kids. She feels students are not best served best when instruction is online. She asked to keep kids in school and use webcams in classrooms for those unable to attend. She feels safety protocols are in place for students and staff.

David Hedengren, a former Board member, and feels the safest place for kids is in school. He hopes that staff members get priority when a vaccine is available. He is concerned about the mental health of kids.

Heather Griggs shared her frustration with the lack of substitutes available as a reason to pull back 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. She stated her concern that the District is not accepting emergency substitutes at this time.

Melissa shared her concern that the Board spent so much time discussing elementary options and very little time on secondary students. She feels the District is failing half of our children and asked the Board to consider returning secondary students as soon as possible.

**4.0 CONSENT AGENDA** (approval by a single vote of the Board)

It was moved by Heather Cleary and seconded by Ken Gosney –

THAT THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS (4.1) THROUGH (4.3). WIH REVISED PERS ACTION.

Vote: Cleary, yes; Oldson, yes; Williams, yes; Gosney, yes; and Jansons, yes.  
Motion was approved.

**4.1 Personnel Actions**

CERTIFICATED PERSONNEL

OUT OF ENDORSEMENT FOR 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

Fairfield, Randy, English, Health, PE, Three Rivers HomeLink

Beierle, Beverly, Health, PE, Three Rivers HomeLink

Aichele, Tamra, Elementary Ed. K-8, Three Rivers HomeLink

Meredith, Amy, Elementary Ed, ELA, Social Studies, Health, PE, Three Rivers HomeLink

Smith, Angel, Elementary Ed. K-8, Three Rivers HomeLink

CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL

NEW HIRES FOR THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

Kahl, Abigail, Paraeducator, Tapteal Elementary, effective 11/16/2020

Richardson, Angelika, Paraeducator (Leave Replacement), Badger Mt., effective 11/16/2020

Walker, Christine, Paraeducator, Special Programs, effective 11/30/2020

RESIGNATIONS FOR THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

Gardner, April, Paraeducator, Lewis & Clark Elementary, eff. 12/9/2020 (continue as Cert. Sub)

Napolitan, Tarra, Bus Driver, Transportation, effective 11/4/2020

**4.2 Budget Monthly**

**4.3 Warrant Information**

ASB Fund Warrant Nos. 40006680 through 40006682 for \$680.45

Nos. 40006683 through 40006684 for \$832.32

No. 54000300 for \$55.00

General Fund Warrant Nos. 100745656 through 10074627 for \$367,368.27

Nos. 51001048 through 51001055 for \$336,454.57

Nos. 71002041 through 71002050 for \$34,556.24

Nos. 10074744 through 10074792 for \$89,051.34

Nos. 51001057 through 51001061 for \$36,361.73  
Nos. 71002051 through 71002065 for \$15,655.50  
Capital Projects Fund Warrant Nos. 20001554 through 20001556 for \$29,846.07  
Nos. 52000193 through 52000195 for \$489,355.93  
Self-Insurance Warrant No. 5700022 for \$1,750.00  
No. 70000176 for \$684.67  
No. 70000177 for \$562.00

### **5.0 FUTURE GENDA ITEMS**

- \*Possible Board Workshop to discuss metrics-December
- \*Mr. Hansen will continue to update the county COVID data on Friday
- \*Student Town Hall
- \*Ethics Committee update
- \*First quarter grades discussion
- \*Budget update and discussion

### **6.0 BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT REPORTS**

Shelley Redinger reminded all that tomorrow is a half day with all students online. She thanked the Board members for their support and urged all to take a break and enjoy their family for Thanksgiving.

Jill Oldson reported attending the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) Conference last week with some great breakout sessions, especially the budget information that was shared. She asked to discuss appointing a student representative to the Board.

Rick Jansons also commented on the WSSDA Conference and wished everyone and Happy Thanksgiving.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:11 P.M.

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RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT NO.

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SECRETARY, BOARD OF DIRECTORS