

Superintendent's COVID-19 Advisory Task Force

December 14, 2020

Minutes

5:30 – start

- I. Review of Agenda, Purpose & Values
- II. Review of Mansfield ISD Data
- III. Review of Comparison Data:
 - Updated data includes percentages of cumulative cases based on in-person enrollment, MISD is at 3.51%
 - Review of worldwide, national data, state data, county data comparisons

Table Talk: Discuss concerns/questions based on the data presented

- *Group 1:*
 - What is HEB doing better than us? Their numbers are a little better than MISD
 - Based on the data presented, it looks like we are having some success with our numbers being low. Please continue what we're doing if it's successful.
 - *Group 2:*
 - Do we have any trending data? What are we looking like over time?
 - *Group 3:*
 - Pleased to see MISD numbers, only one district has better percentages than we have.
 - In a discussion between 2 people who work on campuses (1 elementary and 1 middle) safety protocols on campuses seem to be working and are reflected in the data.
 - Revisit the data of total number of students who have been quarantined since the beginning of school and % of who because positive
 - Hearing a lot of chatter in the community regarding the CDC's new relaxed protocols and when will MISD adopt those?
 - *Group 4:*
 - Appreciated having the in-person ratios, gave us more context
 - Wondered about the reported student covid case counts, it includes virtual students that come for activities—this impacts the data because they aren't counted in MISD in-person enrollment numbers
 - Elementary quarantined students with developed symptoms is much higher, may be impacted by elementary parents being more willing to report that information back vs. high school students/parents not reporting.
 - Request to see the quarantine to symptom data
- IV. Review Updated Quarantine Guidelines: The committee will review new proposed guidelines from various agencies and provide feedback and recommendation to the District on any potential updates to current MISD guidelines.
 - CDC- 3 options for guidelines (see PowerPoint)
 - TEA- 4 options for guidelines (see PowerPoint)
 - Tarrant County- 3 options for guidelines (see PowerPoint)
 - MISD Options- 4 potential options initially (see PowerPoint)

- Under Tarrant County guidance, staff option is not feasible. 7-day option is only available for staff.
- Leaves 14-day, 10-day with consistent masking and symptom monitoring for students/staff and 7-day with testing for staff only.
- Reviewed Tarrant county incubation and return timeline options for both students and staff

Table Talk: Replacement Statement according to TCPH Guidance (plus/delta) Look at effectiveness, unintended consequences and impact on learning.

Original statement: *“Exclude contacts form the building for 14 days”*

Replace with: *“Exclude contacts form the building for 10 days without testing if no symptoms have been reported. Require daily symptom monitoring at home and masking through day”*

- Group 1:

Plus-

- Others have made the change and it appears to be working for them (Methodist Mansfield hospital)
- Students and teachers return sooner; students miss less instructions
- Substitute costs will go down and will save the district \$

Delta-

- Will require students to wear a mask on days 11-14, this will be hard for students under age 10
- Relying on people to monitor themselves and report symptoms day 11-14 is a concern
- Not sure if the science behind this supports it. Is there data or is it public pressure?

- Group 2:

Plus-

- More face to face instruction—less time of students shifting between virtual and face to face

Delta-

- Students who are not wearing masks will be expected to wear masks, how will that work?
- Teachers will also have to monitor students on days 11-14, that’s one more requirement for teachers
- Impact for students/families who are comfortable with the current system- if the change occurs, they may no longer be comfortable.
- This change could cause us to lose staff who are comfortable with current system but may not be ok with the change
- Has any other district already made this change? How is it working?
- Request that quarantine numbers also include percentage of staff who are quarantined and then become symptomatic or test positive.

- Group 3:

Plus-

- More students back in school, less missed in person instruction

Delta-

- We have good numbers and percentages right now, what if the protocol changes mean we go in the wrong direction?
- How will young students handle masking requirements for days 11-14?

- Would students have extra monitoring on days 11-14 on campus? If so, if it falls to the nurse, its extra work for the nurse/teachers/administrators. Additional monitoring would be needed.
- Younger students often don't have a fever; how would we know if symptoms develop during days 11-14?
- When we discuss masking and symptom monitoring days 11-14, we are doing that anyways, this would not be new.
- Group 4:
 - Plus-
 - Students and staff would be back faster
 - Helps parents who struggle with childcare needs/instructional support during the longer quarantine
 - Chance of keeping our campuses open goes up (staff not out as long)
 - Delta-
 - It does open up the potential to bring a contagious student or staff back to campus
 - How accurately and how closely will parents be self-monitoring students?

Table Talk: Regroup- Can you accept the change?

- Group 1: (Green Dot)
 - 5 Green, 2 Red
 - Qualifiers:
 - Is there a way to wait until cold and flu season has passed? Maybe after 1st six weeks of 2021 instruction?
 - Parents have already made decisions for in person vs. virtual based on current protocols. If we make changes, can they change their mind?
- Group 2: (Red)
 - Please consider that when numbers are decreasing in Tarrant County that this would be revisited to reconsider.
- Group 3: (Green)
 - 5 Green, 1 Red
- Group 4: (Green)
 - Please consider to monitor trend line data and if numbers start to go up, then revisit and address and potentially increase back to 14 days.

Table Talk: Replacement Statement for staff according to TCPH Guidance (+/delta) Look at effectiveness, unintended consequences and impact on learning.

Original statement: ~~“Exclude contacts form the building for 14 days”~~

Replacement statement: *“Exclude staff contacts from the building for 7 days. Staff member must be without sympoms and have a negative diagnoistic covid-19 test (PCR) collected at any day five or later. Only for critical infrastructure employees. Require daily symptom monitoring and masking.*

- Group 1: (Red)
 - Concern is that by making a change and decreasing the number of days, teachers will view it as another action that does not protect them and they would not be comfortable.
- Group 2: (Red)

- Concerns around inconsistency of staff vs. student protocols, teachers/staff may perceive that their health/safety is not as much of a priority as that of students.
- Would staff be required to test, how would that be handled?
- If staff were not comfortable to return at 7-days, how would that impact the use of personal time/leave time?
- Who would be managing the return time and testing? (workload and confidentiality concerns)
- Group 3: (Red- if we don't know details of the early return being an option vs. required)
 - Would this actually be optional? If a staff was not ready to come back and did not want to come back, would they be allowed to stay out for 14 days? If it was optional, staff may feel more comfortable
 - Who pays for the test? Free tests are longer turn around time
 - Who is truly considered critical infrastructure staff?

*District Answers- At this point in time, these decisions have not yet been made, they are items that we would consider. We are taking notes of your feedback.
- Group 4: (~~Green with a caveat!~~) * Changed to Red at the conclusion of the meeting*
 - Plus
 - We're able to keep campuses open because of our staffing numbers. We cant maintain a campus with staff out.
 - Delta
 - Concern of bringing someone back to early and infecting others
 - If we go to 7-day for teachers/staff but 10-day for students, what message does that send to teachers/staff?

Caveat- Rapid Tests are not accurate, we'd prefer specific test requirement to insure they are correct.

*District Response- Requirement would be the PCR not a rapid test.

Additional Questions/Comments:

- Which test is more reliable—nasal or cheek?
- Can the outcome of a test depend on test administrator?
- Trend line data, whats happening?
- May be a necessity to share some additional information for teachers on day 8 regarding prevention of future outbreak

V. Questions & Answers

- a. Q: Will the district change the quarantine policy to follow new CDC, TEA, and Tarrant County policy of 7-10 days?
A: This has been part of what we're focusing on this evening. We will be reviewing the information gathered tonight.
- b. Q: Does MISD have plans to survey parents and teachers as to what our students (and teachers) are going through and how they are feeling? Would MISD consider asking both teachers and students for suggestions on what MISD could be doing to help?
A: Yes, we surveyed from Oct. 12-28 regarding social emotional needs of teachers, staff, students. Over 5000 students and more than 2300 teachers/staff responded. That data has gone to the Social Emotional Learning team to assist in developing a plan for moving forward. We've been working directly with principals to address campus specific needs.

- c. Q: Since CDC changed the quarantine period to 10 days and 7 if tested negative, is MISD going to change that policy also?
A: Same response as the first questions, we need to look at the current feedback and data and then make some recommendations.
- d. Q: With the rising cases around us...are people still upset about quarantining kids? Do they understand that quarantining students is the way we've been allowed to stay open?
A: People are still upset that we are quarantining students, yes. Do they have an understanding that that's why we've been able to stay open, I'm not sure. Everyone as their own perspectives and we have to respect that. We do know that people are upset.
- e. Q: Will any protocols be changing? I am receiving letters every day from both of my children's schools? Can we at least consider returning to virtual until the numbers go down?
A: Protocols seem to be working, Tarrant County is 21% positivity rate and we are not there. We are doing better but our numbers are going up. We've created a mitigation strategy when we are in the 3-5% range on a campus or facility. We send a team out to look at what's happening and make a recommendation, this has helped keep our numbers down. Even with this, we are trending up along with the county but not as drastically.
- f. Q: In this difficult and everything-changing COVID environment, how would MISD rate itself in terms of how it's handled everything in this COVID environment? Any big takeaways or lessons learned?
A: This is the first time any of us have been through this. In the situation that we're in, we've done the very best that we can to manage through the pandemic. We are a continuous improvement district and we are always looking for ways to improve. Have we been 100% perfect, no, I don't know anyone who has. We are constantly self-reflecting and looking at where we can continue to make improvement.
- g. Q: What is the percentage of students/teachers who have been quarantined who have ended up testing positive and/or shown symptoms?
A: Group reviewed slide from PowerPoint on students/staff who quarantined and then developed symptoms or tested positive. (Request to separate students and staff in future report) Approximately 1.7% are developing symptoms or testing positive, this does not capture those who are asymptomatic or people not recognizing their symptoms them as covid systems. It also does not capture those who choose not to test or report back. While the number is around 1.7%, we know it is not capturing everyone.
- h. Q: According to the CDC, people who have tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to quarantine or get tested again for up to 3 months as long as they do not develop symptoms again. Is MISD following this policy?
A: Yes, we are following that policy.
- i. Q: Are MISD athletic trainers performing stress tests on athletes who have previously tested positive for COVID-19?

A: No, we are not performing stress tests. We do have a return to play protocol for students who test positive or have prominent symptoms. We learned early on that myocarditis is sometimes a bi-product of covid, we consulted a doctor at Methodist Mansfield to put together a 4-day return to play protocol. Protocol includes: Day 1- 15 minutes @ 70%; Day 2- 30 min @ 70%; Day 3- 45 min @ 70%; Day 4-1h @ 70%. If no cardio symptoms emerge by day 4 they can return to play.

- j. Q: There are rumors that MISD is considering extending the school year, starting earlier next year or even extending the school day because so many kids are behind and failing. Is this true? If so, what about the kids who aren't failing or behind? Has MISD considered creating some sort of "gap classes" for those kids that are not up to standards? For example, those students who were behind wouldn't take electives and take a makeup class instead? Why make students who don't need it stay longer or go to school longer. Why make teachers work longer hours?

A: We are not extending the school year for teachers or students. We are not planning on starting early or extending the school year later. We do know that there are some students who have gaps in learning. Keeping students at the forefront of what we do, we have a group to focus on closing the gaps. We have met with more than 300 teachers to get input from them on how to best meet the needs of students and to get teacher recommendations on how to help students. Our goal is to create opportunities for students have gaps and get input from teachers on how to best serve students.

- k. Q: Will MISD consider allowing students to use their lockers? Many students are complaining of back pain because of having to carry such heavy bags all day.

A: Students currently have access to lockers upon request. If a student would like a locker, they need to talk to their Principal or AP and lockers will be issued.

- l. Q: What is the current failure rate? Virtual/In-Person? And is there any grading/failure rate data being gathered on the students who have been quarantined? Especially those that have been quarantined multiple times?

A:

- o 2nd Grade- In Person 7%; Virtual 7%,
- o 3rd Grade- In Person 10%; Virtual 10%
- o 4th grade- In Person 11%; Virtual 15%
- o Intermediate (5th-6th): In Person 11%; Virtual 19%
- o Middle School (7th-8th): In Person 27%; Virtual 31%
- o High School (9th-12th): In Person 28%; Virtual 30%

Quarantine Data: there is not a way to run a quarantine failure report, we do not have that data.

Student performance is key; this is part of why we are leading the closing the gaps meetings with teacher to support our students who may be struggling.

- m. Q: If a virtual student is failing 2 or more classes at the end of six-week period next semester, will schools be allowed to force students to come back unless have an underlying health condition or someone in their household?

A: TEA recently released guidelines to compel students to return. Our Principals have that information and we will begin to look at that 2nd semester. If there are underlying

health/safety conditions, there is a process to be considered that is detailed out in the guidelines.

- n. Q: Based on the last meeting, we were informed that there's an increase in failing students due to current environment. Can you update the group w specific tasks/initiatives you're executing on to help rectify this issue?

A: Curriculum coordinators do a great job of spiraling in information for students. We are looking at additional supports for 2nd semester. In some cases, we have had teachers ask for training on how to reach hard-to-reach students. Curriculum Coordinators do an amazing job of working with teachers and making sure they have materials and resources they need to address gaps and failure.

- o. Q: Are we considering paying subs a higher daily rate?

A: We currently have a class coverage committee to address concerns. That committee has come up with a number of recommendations to attract substitute including: Creating permanent sub pool; add incentives for subs who work more days; create more opportunities for teachers to cover each other; and increase marketing efforts to employ more substitutes.

- p. Q: Can you provide an update on MISD's progress on recruiting and retention of teachers? A few weeks ago my 2nd grader didn't have class because her teacher was out. She was still required to turn in her Seesaw assignments but had no instruction. Is this due to a low talent pool?

A: That example sounds like it may be that a substitute did not pick up that class for that day. I would encourage the parent to reach out to the campus administrator regarding how it was handled that day. Recruiting and retention has not changed.

Table Talk: Any other comments or things you'd like the district to consider regarding COVID?

- Group 1-
 - Based on a conversation between a teacher and an administrator in our group, we'd like to see the district consider any method they can think of to improve teacher morale.
- Group 2-
 - Thank you for trend data, nice to see and it was a good communicator for where we truly are.
 - Asks & Please Considers for the district-
 - How much is campus vs. community spread (make available to public)?
 - District Response- County/TEA website has that information. Below is the link for the information regarding source of infection of positive cases that we report to TEA.
<https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/schools/texas-education-agency/>
 - Consider community and county numbers in decision making instead of just using our protocols
 - Others also asked to please consider focus on keeping schools open and not using community/county to impact our decisions
 - Please consider impact on student achievement in decision making
- Group 3-

- Please re-visit shutdown protocols- concerns that schools are near those protocols for shutdown
 - When we have schools with higher numbers, is it one part of the school? Everywhere? One class or area? We'd like to see more information/data. Keep shutdown protocols in mind.
 - District Response: We are aware of where the cases are in each particular school/facility. We always follow the protocol and who meets the criteria for quarantine. There is not a time that we would shut down a classroom unless we are not able to do the investigation and contact tracing. As long as we can follow our protocols, we focus on specific quarantine of close contacts and avoid larger shutdowns.
 - Please bring in additional community speakers—suggestions including the infectious disease specialist from Cooks Children re: covid in young children; psychologist who can talk about ramifications of quarantine
 - Concern about counselors--do we need more? They are currently spread too thin and the need is great with students.
 - How do we get virtual students more engaged and connected? We still have work to do, how can we improve?
- Group 4-
 - Teachers discussion- how will teachers feel about making this change to 7 days with our data looking this way (specifically considering the trend line of new cases per week)? Will they feel as though we are not prioritizing them? Would they not feel appreciated or valued? Due to this concern, we were leaning towards changing our teacher quarantine requirement from green to red (when looking at 7-day vs 10-day) *This change has been reflected in the minutes.*

VI. Dr. Cantu closing

- Thank you!
 - Special thanks to Holly Teague, Victoria Webster, Executive Council, Cathy Marsh, our other Health Partners (Allan Beck, Kenneth Rose, Juan Fresquez), and our table facilitators
- Thank you everyone—students, parents, staff—for being a part of this.
- Charter indicates we'll meet monthly through the fall; we will meet in the spring on an as needed basis.
- Have a healthy and happy holiday season, we'll see you back in the spring!