

Highline Public Schools | 2021.01.20.Board.Meeting

You're good to go, Angelica.

Thank you. So I want to welcome everyone to our regularly scheduled Zoom board meeting. And with that, for everyone, I'll ask to stand up for the Pledge of Allegiance. Ready? I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. You all may be seated. And I'll ask at this time for Mr. Kyle, if you could do roll call, please.

Director Van?

Here.

Director Dorsey?

Here.

Director Garcia?

Here.

Director Bradford?

Here.

Director Alvarez?

Here. And with us is our superintendent Dr. Enfield and her cabinet. And with that, I'm going to ask for any changes or addition to tonight's agenda.

I have none.

None.

Seeing that we have none, so we'll continue with our agenda. And we have scheduled communications. So members of the public can attend only remotely, so obviously not in person. Only online or by phone. And it's per our governor's proclamation.

So the live public comments will not be available for this virtual special board-- or this board meeting. But your comments, questions, or concerns are welcome. And we get them, already have for today

the public comment.

And I'm going to ask our vice chair Director Van if he could read those. They are timed at four minutes. I will be keeping the timer. So as you read, Director Van, I will be keeping time. So I'll hand it over to you.

Thank you, President Alvarez. Here's written public comments for January 20, 2021 for-- if I am unable to finish these up because of the time limit, board directors, you have these in your email so you can finish them. First, here we go. First one is from Justina Guyott.

"It is with disbelief and sadness that I find the need to appeal to the public officials for protection of the health and well-being of my students, co-workers, their families, the greater community, and myself in regards to in-person instruction. The conditions that led to the implementation of distance learning in March of 2020 are worse today. As you know, we are in the grips of a historic pandemic, and widespread vaccine distribution is not available. Unfortunately, infection rates have escalated in King County and are even higher in the Highline School District communities. Regrettably, national and state politics have led the governor to disregard the public health standards and that he himself implemented. He is banning the in-person restrictions that have prevented the sickness and deaths of hundreds of community members that just a few short weeks ago he was enforcing.

The statistic clearly reveals that this virus is not an equal opportunity illness. There are greater rates of serious illness and death in communities of color. The majority of our students and families and half of our staff are people of color. There is a school board duty and obligation to advocate for their lives.

The return to in-person instruction contradicts public health best practices. The new decision tree that the district has presented to staff for reopening schools has abandoned policy of preventing transmission in favor of reaction to infections when an outbreak occurs. I am fearful of the sickness long term detrimental health effects and even death that will result from returning to in-person instruction at this time. I'm relying on your action on behalf of the Highline School community members, students, their families, and staff to prevent predictable tragedy.

This pandemic has brought stark relief to the fact that our country does not have a national child care system to support working families. It is clear that this pandemic has required extraordinary measures of families in order to support their students. School staff are aware of the pressures that continue in-person work, work at home, or unemployment are imposing on families. Many staff are

dealing with the same stressors. In fact, school staff are anxious to return in in-person learning when it is safe to do so. Hopefully there will be widespread vaccination in place, and we will be able to open schools in normal in-person learning in the fall of 2021. However, the majority of staff and families participated in district sponsored information sessions have voiced their support for continuing the current distance learning model despite the current hardships.

In addition to health safety and equity considerations, there are a number of practical and educational-based reasons to stay with the current distance learning instruction. The proposed 2.25 hours of instruction two days per week that has no available child care included does not provide a realistic option for working families. It is clear from labor statistics reporting on the number of women who have had to leave the workforce that there are not enough childcare slots in the district or community-based programs to support the two hour two day per week returned to school.

If we were to begin in-person instruction, the majority of classroom teachers in our buildings will apply for accommodations, and our already strained supply of substitutes will collapse. As teachers, we understand that distance learning is not the ideal learning environment. However, the disruption to the learning currently taking place from the inevitable Yo-Yo effect of closing and reopening schools or individual classrooms due to the accelerating transmission rates will seriously erode the effectiveness of the structures now in place. In fact, the south--"

It is time, Mr. Van.

Thank you. Next comment is coming from Rachelle Monohan. "We realize that the state of Washington has shifted the burden for reopening schools from state level to the district level, putting you all in a precarious position. We appreciate the hard work and dedication that has gone into the thoughtful planning for distance learning and keeping our students, community, and staff safe.

You made the decision in late fall to remain in distance learning because the transmission rates in our district were higher on average in the rest of King County. Since that time, transmission rates are higher. Experts are predicting even higher rates due to variants we know are coming and should have a foothold by mid-March. Due to these variants, school around the United States and other countries are being forced to return to distance learning for safety purposes.

Although it is at a lower rate, children do not transmit COVID-19. By bringing up to 14 different households together every day for over two hours, children will be exposed to more opportunities to catch this disease than if they were at home. Their teachers will be exposed to twice that many households each day. Many of our students and staff members live in multi-generational households.

Imagine the guilt a child or staff member would feel if they were in any way connected to the severe illness or even death of a family member, classmate, or staff member.

Numerous staff members will need accommodations or take leave to remain safe until they're fully vaccinated. If school starts on March 1, as Dr. Enfield has announced it will be, their current hybrid model will require much shuffling of staff members. Many students, regardless of their choice of online learning or in-person learning, will have a teacher that is new to them as well as some new classmates. In some cases, it may be that the teachers are required to move between schools to cover vacancies.

Highline understands that relationships are the foundation to a good education and has devoted a great deal of resources to this key component of learning. Time has been prioritized for daily class wide morning meetings where students and staff build community. With the upcoming shuffle of students and teachers, we are imposing the breakdown of community at every grade level.

FaceTime with teachers is an hour per week lower during hybrid model. That equates to approximately 15 hours lost instruction time during the remainder of the school year. This does not include the time required to rebuild the classroom community and learn procedures for in-person instruction.

You wait until teachers are fully vaccinated, the majority of us will be safe enough to return to the classroom and eliminate enormous upheaval and reshuffling of staff that comes with the March 1 start date. Post vaccinations, the classroom will not be ideal, but it would be safer environment both physically and emotionally for students, their family, and staff. Thank you for your consideration on the delaying of the start."

Our third comment tonight is from the Cedarhurst Teamsters and HEA staff members. "We are writing on behalf of the health and well-being of the students, families, and staff of Cedarhurst Elementary in response to the half-day hybrid plans proposed to begin March 1. We urgently request that the district wait for all staff and community members to have the opportunity to be vaccinated before transition to in-person learning.

Highline leadership has a responsibility to protect the safety of those in which it serves and employs. To fulfill this responsibility, the district must prioritize staff and community member vaccinations prior to in person learning. The decision to implement a half-day hybrid model without widespread vaccinations will undoubtedly impact the health of the Highline community.

Current data recognizes that Highline is a high risk community at 500 cases per 1,000. SeaTac and Tukwila being most impacted at 562. We have watched the nation's leaders negatively target BIPOC communities and essential workers. We urge Highline as educational institution with power and capacity to disrupt that narrative and uphold its proclaimed promise.

Highline equity policy 0010P1 defines disproportionality as a means to indicate that a policy or action is impacting one group or more or less than another. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the Highline community. It is essential that the school district use its power to protect its community moving forward. Given the information shared in staff and family webinars, we do not believe that the current hybrid plans suffice.

Policy 0010 further states that the historic decisions and current and equitable practices advantage certain students while disadvantaging others. Students of color have been negatively impacted by institution of education. The district's decision to reopen prior to vaccination contradicts Highline's position as a leader of educational equity, one that recognizes the position of the community it serves. Educator and community eligibility for vaccination is within our reach. We are grateful for Dr. Enfield's statement of solidarity to state officials to prioritize educational staff.

However, we urge Highline and the position it holds to postpone the return of in-person learning until all of our educators and community members receive both doses of the vaccine. Considering the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the Highline community and the incoming virus strain, it is unwise to proceed with the current hybrid plans. We recognize Highline's intention in becoming an anti-racist institution with its call to action and to honor its policies.

Highline policy 0010 states all staff members are charged with recognizing and speaking out when we are not meeting our vision of being an equity-focused district. By highlighting the equity lines declared by the Highline School District, we staff members of Cedarhurst Elementary recognize and call on the district to realign themselves with this equity-focused vision. Hybrid learning without vaccination will ignore and worsen the existing disparities for all stakeholders. We are holding this district accountable to the inequitable practice of hybrid learning. Thank you for your time and consideration."

Next one is from Beverly Park Elementary staff. "Highline Public School has made the decision to return to in-person learning March 1, 2021. We members of the Beverly Park at Glendale Elementary staff are ready to voice our concern regarding this reopening. We request that the district reconsider this potentially deadly decision and delay reopening until all staff working with students in person

have had access to the full regiment of the COVID-19 vaccination. Reopening March 1 ignores the spike of COVID cases happening in our own backyard as well as the unknown potential impact of the new more contagious strain we may have in our community.

In addition, we request the district address concerns for the social and emotional wellness of our district. Educators have worked tirelessly to deliver instruction while keeping students and the community safe. This is our paramount duty. We look forward to the day we once again join with our colleagues and students in person but not until it is safe to do so.

Vaccine distribution for teachers is imminent, yet most teachers are not currently eligible until after the slated start date. Bringing students and teachers together prior to this jeopardizes the health and safety of teachers and their families. It also puts students and the greater community at risk. Dr. Ben Gupta, professor of health metrics at the University of Washington, recently stated teachers and support staff in schools should be fully vaccinated before they're expected to return to in-person instruction. Doing otherwise is wrong and unjust to teachers nationwide.

While teachers have the option to make a request for remote learning, there will be unlikely enough spaces for all who request them. Teachers will be forced into classrooms in unsafe conditions. The option to take leave without pay or forced to use sick leave unjustly impacts teachers without supplemental income. Additionally, the teachers least likely to be offered a remote teaching position are those at the end of the line for vaccinations.

Finally, the students and families at Beverly Park are from the demographic shown to be at greater risk for a bad outcome if they contract COVID-19. Distance learning may not be ideal with regard to the social and emotional well-being of our students. The hybrid model currently being considered imposes more negative impacts for many of our students, especially for our youngest learners. On March 1, pre-K, kindergarten, ISE, and first graders are slated to return to school. Kindergartners will walk into a building brand new to them wearing a mask, walking and sitting feet apart, to be greeted by a mask wearing adult who will likely not be their familiar teacher.

The distance model has allowed to differentiate with the more flexible approach to learning than will be possible in person. For example, teachers are currently able to hold guided reading groups using the Zoom platform. When we move to in-person, it will be difficult to hear and see children reading and know where they are pointing in their books. Many will miss their families and will be worried about new surroundings as is typical for young children.

There will be no hugs from teachers or friends to soothe them. They will sit alone at their desks for

over two hours. They will not be able to play with peers at recess or enjoy time with shared toys. Young children learn to solve problems, collaborate, gain independence, and build self-confidence through play and working closely with their peers. The hybrid model will not afford these experiences given the restriction.

Highline understands that relationships are the foundation to a good education that has devoted a great deal of resources to this key component of learning. Time has a--"

[ALARM CHIMING]

We're out of time.

OK. Thank you. Our next comment is coming from Domina Merriewether O'Connor. "Members of the Highline school board, as the parent of a kindergartner who has struggled with remote learning, I have eagerly awaited the district's plan for safe return in-person learning. I was deeply disappointed that the plan presented by Dr. Enfield seemed to capture the worst of all options-- minimizing meaningful in-person instruction and accessibility for most families while maximizing exposure risk on site staff and counting on the level of cleaning sanitation that could most generously be characterized as aspirational.

I would urge you to reject this proposal and instead urge the superintendent to pursue an AB model. Such a model is superior to a split day schedule in the following ways. Longer blocks of instructional time-- that means allowing meaningful learning opportunities even with transitions; more total hours of in-person instruction in each week-- six hours two times per week than the 2.25 hours four times per week; reduced exposures of on site staff by 50%-- each cohort twice per week as opposed to all students four times per week; reasonable opportunity for thorough cleaning between cohorts at the end of each school day; manageable schedules for working families and those struggling students to manage; and manage transportation and care giving.

Additionally, plans should include the use of sheltered outdoor space for exposure mitigation. Many of our school facilities have covered outdoor corridors and play pavilions that could be used for lunchtime or other activities that require students to remove masks. During the pandemic of 1918, schools moved outside. We should do the same thing where we can [INAUDIBLE] and when we can.

While daily in-person instruction is ideal, the current split day proposal is inaccessible to most families and honestly doesn't feel safe to many who are privileged enough to be able to access it. To have some instruction in a more sustainable and accessible format is superior to the current situation

of no access or the proposed daily access that feels ill conceived. Thank you for your opportunity to provide this feedback on this important subject. Parent at Hilltop Elementary."

OK. Let's see here. And we have one last public comment. And this is from president of the HEA board, Sandy Hunt. "Dear school board directors, as you have been receiving letters from individuals and from entire building staff asking for a pause on the opening of schools until there is access to vaccines, so am I. There's also a staff and community petition circulating.

I have encouraged people to write decision makers, but I have in no way directed what they have written. I have taken all the feedback and letters and asked them to be assembled so that my executive board and impact bargaining team can systematically review concerns, questions, and quite frankly demands. As key decision makers, I hope that you're able to find the time to thoughtfully and systematically review them as well.

Against this backdrop, WEA has recently passed a resolution to affirm that instruction room should remain in remote until in building staff has access to vaccine. I personally committed to advocating not only for our own staff but those in surrounding area to honor that resolution while still working with the district to prepare for when students can return. The HEA executive board will meet January 25. At this time at this meeting, we will set a date for general membership meeting where our members will direct us as to the next step as a union.

Why is this coming to a head now when so many other districts are receiving students? A number of things have changed. As a school board, these changes cannot be ignored. Yes, the governor has revised allowable transmission rates, which move the goalposts for open. At the time, many working on the opening of buildings understood his rationale. There was data, and data upon which he made that decision was gathered from districts, states, countries where schools with appropriate precautions were opening successfully.

Shortly after that announcement, however, more transmissible variants of the virus began to be reported. Since then, evidence has mounted quickly that these variants do not operate in the same manner within schools as the original. As these findings continue to emerge, they have rightly called into question the validity of the studies used by Governor Inslee to set his new guidance for in-person learning. Because of this, the issue cannot be framed as different people are looking at different studies and drawing different conclusions. The issue instead is we no longer have accurate data to formulate plans to open schools in ways that limit transmissions. This is clearly playing out in Europe this week where schools have been operating successfully since the start of the school year now are

beginning to shut down.

As a result, leading experts in our own backyard who once were key proponents of opening schools are stepping back from that position. Less than a week ago, UW critical care pulmonologist Dr. Vin Gupta said in the fall there was relative consensus in the scientific community that opening schools to students was unlikely to lead to super spreader events. He now, however, was quoted admitting in the last four weeks that has changed with the emergence of this new strain that it's more transmissible across more age groups, not just older adults. And we must assume it's already here.

This is a disappointing fact that we must face all together. No one is more saddened by this than I. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the district and union have had an ideal partnership working side by side, driven by science, recognizing the need to meet individual combinations while supporting the needs of the community. But circumstances have changed, and our aspirations much change with them. I truly hope that decision can be made to pass the opening of in-person instruction until we have a greater understanding of how this new--"

Dr. Van, we're out of time.

[ALARM CHIMING]

Thank you. OK. That is it for our public comments for this evening.

Thank you, Director Van, for reading those. And with that, we're going to move over to our superintendent's update. So I'll pass it on to you, Dr. Enfield.

Thank you, President Alvarez. And good evening, everybody. Happy inauguration day. So I don't care where you fall on the political spectrum. Amanda Gordon, our poet laureate-- hello. I mean, that young woman stopped me in my tracks. She was magnificent. And if you did not get the chance to hear her poem, I really encourage you to read it. I think it will go down in history with Maya Angelou's that we spoke of so often after she gave hers. But it was truly inspirational.

And as we know, our new president, President Biden, has committed to returning students to school, particularly K-8, a priority in his first 100 days. And I know that we are all eager to hear the specifics of his plan. And it is sorely needed. Absent strong leadership at the federal level, states have been left to make these determinations on their own. So we have wild disparities across our nation in the metrics, the standards, the thresholds that states and consequently school districts are having to use to make decisions on when and how to bring students back into school.

And additionally, there is so much conflicting information out there. I had one Beverly Park teacher reach out to me. For every study that says it's safe, there's a study that says it isn't. I get that. There is so much conflicting information out there. And it is hard to know where to land. I believe we all have great hope that with this new administration, we will gain that clarity.

What we have been consistent with in Highline, however, is first and foremost prioritizing the health and safety of our staff and students. And we have adhered to state guidance consistently. And we are remaining to adhere to state guidance. And as we know, state guidance did change in December.

And so the state is now allowing for-- state guidance is now allowing for students to return in small groups with all safety measures in place given what our current COVID activity rates are in our community. I understand that that feels it sort of creates dissonance and some confusion. But that is the state guidance at this point. And we feel strongly that we have a responsibility to A, follow that guidance as we have all along and B, provide those families with the option to return their students to school for in-person learning if that's what they choose.

So I am going to now read the letter that we sent to staff today because I think it's important that everyone is hearing consistent information. We are sending or maybe already have sent a similar letter also to families. Or this may actually be the Highline families letter. Hold on just a second. I want to make sure that I have the right one. It's the families message. I'm going to read that one.

"Dear Highline families, since announcing the March 1 start date for phasing in in-person learning, we have heard concerns from staff and families about safety, scheduling difficulties, and--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

I want to acknowledge those concerns and the anxiety that you are feeling right now. I know we all want the same things-- to keep our families, students, and staff safe and to do what is best for our children. I think we can all agree that remote learning is a poor substitute for face to face instruction for the vast majority of students and that we all want our students back in school as soon as it is safe to do so. I promise you we would not ask students and staff to return to school buildings if we were not confident we could do it safely. Our public health experts are telling us we can do it safely.

About 20 districts in our area have already begun or are soon beginning in-person instruction. Districts across our state and nation, many with COVID rates as high or higher than South King County, have been operating in person for several months safely and successfully. This is consistent with our own experience with students with special needs who are learning in person right now. We

have had zero transmissions in school since we started in November. Data from other districts show that transmission rates in schools are the same or lower than in the community.

When we look at the data and can objectively say that in-person instruction does not put our staff at greater risk than they experience in the community, it is difficult to justify delaying in-person instruction for families who want it and students who need it. I cannot in good conscience deny our children an opportunity that other children are getting and that our state supports. This will only increase the gaps we are working so hard to close.

The possibility of changing teachers is not what any of us wants. I want to reassure you that this is a possibility not a probability. Try as we might, there was no plan that kept classes together without asking teachers to manage both in-person and remote students at once. We did not feel we could ask that of teachers when they are telling us it would add to their already exhausting workload.

Whether your child has a teacher change or not, this transition will be an adjustment. For some students, though, it will mean that they can truly engage in learning for the first time in almost a year. For some families, it will mean they can return to work or increase their work hours and their ability to provide for their families.

Our commitment to equity and to becoming an anti-racist organization compels us to hear and serve all students and families in Highline. We recognize this plan is not ideal for anyone. The unfortunate truth is there is no ideal plan or even a good plan. But many schools across the country are showing that this plan can work and work safely.

I know we have all been through so much already. I also know our students are resilient and that with your support and encouragement, they will rise to this challenge. I'm confident our teachers and staff will make the rest of the year a positive experience for your child in hybrid or remote learning. I know this because if any school district can do it, Highline can, and we will."

Now, I don't pretend that this letter allays the concerns and the fears that so many feel. And I want to acknowledge those. And I know that they're real. And as the leader of this system and a member of this community who cares deeply about the children, families, and staff in this community, I feel I have a personal and professional responsibility to remain focused and ground us in the facts as best I can. That is challenging, as I said earlier, given how much is going on. But knowing what other districts are doing, knowing what I'm hearing from the state superintendent, knowing what we are hearing from the Department of Health, we want to continue to plan for a March 1 return.

Now, should state guidance change, we will absolutely revisit our plans because we will be consistent in listening to state guidance. But to abandon our plans now would jeopardize our ability to have students return in-person on March 1 because these plans are extremely complicated. And we want to make sure that we accommodate as many staff and as many students and families as we can. And so we're going to need this time in order to make that happen. So at this point, absent a change in guidance from the state, OSPI Department of Health, we will continue with our planning.

And I want you to know this. For every person who shares with me that they do not want to send their child back, I hear from another who says they do. We are gathering the survey data right now. And we'll do our best to listen and accommodate as many people as we can. We know we won't be able to do that for everyone. But that doesn't mean that we aren't trying. Staff is working incredibly, incredibly hard to do this well.

And I will leave you with this. I know that there is for many people a sense of tremendous hope as we move forward. And some of the messages that we heard today at the inauguration are ones of coming together, of making sure that we're not using divisive rhetoric, that we are really listening to one another without being dismissive. I want you to share. I want our community to share what they are feeling. And I want us to do so in a way that is calm and respectful.

We are doing ourselves and our children no service by modeling for them disrespectful discourse. We can do better than that. And so I ask that you work with us in conversation and partnership so that we can move forward in service of our children and plan a safe return to in-person learning as soon as we can. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Dr. Enfield. So now we move on to school board reports. I don't. And Bernie, do you have any legislative reports?

I do not.

Aaron, anything?

Yep. Just to give you guys an update that I am continuing to reach out to local representatives. So I met with Representative Fitzgibbon and Cody this last week and invited them to a elected's breakfast in the spring. So please keep your calendar open for Tuesday, June 8, 8:00 AM available if you guys would like to join.

I have an upcoming meeting with Senator DeWine on Monday. If anybody would like to join, invitation is there. And Director Bradford and I are meeting with Representative Gregerson next Thursday on

the 28th.

And just a reminder, we're sharing our legislative priorities and just giving general updates on where we're at with the plan to return to in-person learning. So that's my leg report.

So Dr. Garcia, could you send us a calendar invite for those meetings? And that way I know-- I'm at a stage right now if it doesn't live in my calendar, it doesn't exist. And sometimes it doesn't make it on my calendar. So if you already have it in yours and could share it with the rest, that'd be great. I'd appreciate that.

Yeah. I'll share it. And just because I think only two of us can go to these meetings at any given time--

Oh, that's right.

--if somebody would like to-- I'll send out the times and see who else would like to join.

OK. That sounds great. Thank you. That sounds great. With that, since you're on, do you have any director report?

Yeah. I want to start off being consistent in acknowledging that we are in Coast Salish land. And this is just something that I have been trying to be intentional about doing and honoring with the time that I have here on the board. I already talked about the leg update. I wanted to thank Dr. Enfield and all the folks who made the Family Action Committee, FAC. Is that Family Action Committee? Cool.

It was actually a very, very enlightening meeting to be a part of and to see us have civil discourse around this topic of returning to school because many of the families there didn't necessarily agree with what we were going through. But I really appreciated the ability to see Dr. Enfield in action. I said it at the meeting because I think this is what we need-- to be able to disagree [LAUGHS] and do it in a way that isn't mean. So I appreciated that. And I wanted to acknowledge that here. And I would encourage any of my fellow board members to join in on one of the FAC meetings in the future because I thought it was very enlightening.

I'll just-- [SIGHS] I've been struggling to figure out what I wanted to say or if I wanted to say anything at all. So I'll say this. For me, one of the things that I constantly do is are my beliefs centered around equity? And I always use this very simple concept of equity of-- or the definition, which is are we-- is-- sorry. I'm struggling to find the right words. But it's are we making sure that everyone's getting what they need, not that everyone's getting the same? Right?

And as we keep on having this conversation, something I keep on struggling with is that we know that we have a need for students to come back in person. We know that there is this need, that we have not been able to give this opportunity for over a year now to some of our students. And what kind of has rubbed me the wrong way, and I just want to throw it out there to folks, is that we're just saying that need-- I almost feel like folks are saying we don't need to listen to that need anymore. Right? Like, we know better than that. And that sentiment is just rubbing me the wrong way. And I wanted to acknowledge that because I'm struggling a little bit with that concept.

So anyway, that's just something that's been in the back of my mind. I am pretty supportive of the direction we're going. I have been supportive because I know that some of our families and students need to be in person. But I'm also open minded. And I'm also willing to listen to folks. And I have remained that way consistently. So that's what I got. I want to thank folks for continuing to do this. And that's it.

Thank you, Director Garcia. Yes, I'm planning to hopefully attend the next one. So thank you for that report. Director Bradford, anything in a report?

Good evening. I don't have too much by way of report. But I did want to ask a question that I also see in the chat, but it was one that I was curious about as well. And it was President Hunt's message or letter is usually read by Dr. Enfield during the superintendent's report. And so just wondering if it's possible to continue on with the letter where it was picked off-- where Director Van dropped off so that others-- I know that we have access to it. But in this public forum, it does appear that others do want to hear the rest of the letter. Is that outside of protocol?

Director Bradford, I can explain to you later that decision. I did not feel comfortable reading that letter. And so we made it part of public comment. I know that President Hunt will share that with her membership as well. So they will have access to it.

OK. Thank you for that explanation. I have nothing further to report on.

Thank you, Director Bradford. Director Van?

Yeah. A couple of updates here. One is that I'm proud to announce that the Highline Schools Foundation, the board of trustees has selected a new executive director to the foundation. Her name is Anne Gillingham. So it's a little bit easy because Anne Baunach left, and Anne Gillingham is coming on board. So when you guys have an opportunity, would love for you to shoot her an email and welcome her to the team. So that is great news for our foundation to continue to support our

community and schools and our staff.

Let's see here. We also-- part of the WIAA-- I know Tova has sent out some announcements this week in regards to our athletics program. Unfortunately, middle school sports are canceled for the remainder of the year. High school sports will resume. But we're following health guidelines to ensure that our coaches and students are safe.

So WIAA is stating that season one sports can begin February 1. But our athletics department in alignment with King County and PSL leagues has delayed that start date. So they're in the process of developing a plan for sports. So that's good for our kids.

Let's see. And then just on a couple of personal notes, I appreciate the community-- staff, parents-- sending those emails in letting us know how they are feeling and what's going on. I echo Director Garcia's sentiments. We have that need. I have three students in this district that go. Two of them are doing good with online learning. But the third one, he needs help. He needs that one on one in-person learning.

So I think what Dr. Enfield said earlier, this is a choice, a choice that if you want to send your kids back, that's your choice. We have a couple of options to make it work for your family. So that's it for me.

Thank you, Director Van. Director Dorsey?

Thank you, President Alvarez. I don't really have anything other than I agree with Aaron. And also Aaron, I want to thank you for kind of carrying the load on the legislative work. I really do appreciate you picking that up and kind of running with it. So putting the T in teamwork.

But I also think it's really important. For me, one of the things that really resonated about our superintendent's comments was that we're planning to move forward. And I think if we have all experienced anything unanimously in the last 10 months, it's been that nobody knows what next week holds or the week after or the week after. But I do think it's important that we be prepared to do what's in the best interests of the district.

And so I think it's a little premature for people to get too cemented into a stance at this point being January 20, which has been a wonderful day. But we've still got quite a bit of time between now and March 1. And we need to be ready for whatever may come up between now and then.

So anyway, I just think it's important that we all see that we're getting close anyway hopefully. Please,

please get close to the end of this experience for us as a society. And we need to continue to try to just stay the course best we can and be ready for March 1.

And so anyway, I appreciate the work of staff in the planning. But I also really respect the sentiments and the feelings as someone who has not had the opportunity. My work life has continued on throughout this. And so I can really relate to what it feels like to feel as though you're in jeopardy. But I can also relate to the fact that proper precautions and protocols and consistent use of those can keep us as safe as anyone can be at this point in time. So that's all for me. Thank you.

Thank you, Director Dorsey. And again, thank you, everyone, for your comments. And I no longer have children in the district, but I have grandchildren. I have a fourth grader that attends a dual language program. And he will be returning in person. His mom and us, we've had a conversation about what his needs are. And he definitely needs to be in person.

So these are decisions that everyone has to make individually. And we had to sit down and outweigh what is really going to help him in his learning. And that's a personal decision that I and we are making as a family. So thank you, everyone, for your comments. And with that, that concludes our directors' reports. And now we have our consent agenda. So I need a motion to approve our consent agenda. And now I need a second.

I move we approve our consent agenda.

I'll second.

So all in favor say "aye." Aye.

Aye.

Any opposed? So with none being opposed, our consent agenda has been approved. We have an introduction and action item at the same time. And that is approval of this motion would approve the Edupoint software license agreement contract renewal. Any questions or comments?

I do, President Alvarez. Hey, Mark, this one's for you, bud. In 2020, you guys were thrust-- actually the district was thrust into trying to find a new software system for our students and staff. How has ParentVUE, StudentVUE been working out for our district?

This is a pretty substantial increase. I think it's 290 over the next three years. So I'd like to hear from you on how things are working from our old system to our new system. Any pain points, any successes

that you would like to share with us?

Sure. So we have seen changes in the student information system for a few years. We buy into a product, and then it gets bought out or sold or whatever. And as we switch to this particular one, this one was in the previous RFP as well and was number two in the previous RFP. So it became consistent that this tool was still in existence. This tool had improved greatly over its previous use.

I would say that some of the things that are pain points is still adoption by families to use the ParentVUE. That means in many cases, communication with the school and setting up the accounts and making sure that people use it. But as many times as I hear that people aren't connected, I hear just as many say this is great. I'm seeing things inside here.

The hardest part of that is if grades aren't consistently entered, if attendance isn't consistently entered, if information isn't put into the system, the parents see that too. So it's a matter of everyone being consistent and everyone putting in the details.

Now, one of the items that I think the teachers would say is the grade book doesn't accommodate some of their needs. And we heard that. And we reached out to Edupoint about that. And they have revamped the grade book based on a lot of the requests that have come from our teachers. And they are actually going to do a complete overhaul and face lift for us. And it's not going to cost the district anything.

And that is a huge plus for the district. I think that leads into a lot of the work that Chief Academic Officer Suzanne Daugherty is leading with standards based grading and making sure that our teachers have a consistent way of reporting that information. And I think it'll benefit our parents being able to see that data, again, because consistently and timely related to their children.

Thank you, sir. Appreciate that.

I guess a question I would have-- and it's more of a comment slash-- I don't even know if it's like a-- it might be just something we have to do offline, Mark. So feel free to say that. But what is the benefit of using a system like this that's already laid out versus using kind of-- I'm thinking Salesforce and CRM models where you get to create it, and then you have more ownership or power to control that long term. All because I'm worried that we're going to get the rug pulled underneath us again. You know what I mean? Whereas if we did an open source data system, wouldn't we have more control over controlling it long term?

Aaron, I think that's actually true. You could do that. But the issue is going to be can we sustain it? The

state also requires that we have certain reported items. And it's been a little hard for us to be able to do that. We cannot-- well, let's go back. When I started here, we reported 14 fields of information to the state. We now report somewhere around 17 tables, which account for probably 1,500 to 1,800 items of information. Every day it just seems like, they come back.

And consistently, OSPI will change what we need to report and when we have to report that. So staying on top of that is really difficult. And also making sure that you have the fields for that, which is why really you choose a state authorized tool. There are other tools. There's cumulative, which is WSIPC. Those tools [INAUDIBLE] meet the needs.

And I foresee Edupoint selling out and us losing that simply because they keep getting clients. Previous vendor, we weren't seeing new clients added. So I don't think you're going to see additional people come back and say, well, we're going to cut this product. I think you're going to see that this product will continue to grow and enhance. And I think that's evident in Edupoint saying we will revamp that grade book for you. We believe that your requests are valid. And I think that's what matters--

Mark.

--the vendors listening.

Mark, to Director Garcia's point, and I am curious. Are there many school systems that do what he's saying? I'm guessing really big ones like Miami-Dade and others. I know sometimes they try to build their own. But do we know of any? Because it's actually a really interesting question.

If you are under 1,500 students, in those cases, many of them will try and report without using the student information system. La Unified uses one of the biggest products in the nation. And there are seven or eight other districts on that.

There are nearly 100 student information systems across the country. The problem is there are 50 states. And every state has a different department of education with different requests for information. And I'm not advocating for a standard at the federal level that we'd all adhere to.

I do believe that our ability to meet our community's needs by breaking out our ethnicity and other characters further than what the state has defined and then using that information in our reports with you is actually showing value in the way that we're doing things over other districts. So I just don't think time, cost, and the ability to turn around a student information system that is built from the

ground up is viable.

Awesome. Thank you.

Mm-hmm.

Any other questions or comments? Seeing that, I move that the Highline school board approve the Edupoint software license agreement contract renewal. So I'll need a second.

I'll second.

Second.

Was that Joe or Fa'izah?

Fa'izah.

Fa'izah.

That was Fa'izah.

Director Dorsey?

Yea.

Director Bradford?

Yea.

Director Van?

Yea.

Director Garcia?

Yea.

Director Alvarez?

Yea.

This motion passes five to none.

And with that, that concludes our board meeting. We have our next board meeting on February 3 at 6 o'clock. And with that, I'll ask for a motion to adjourn.

I move that we adjourn.

The second. I'll second. [LAUGHS] All in favor that we adjourn, say "aye." Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Any oppose? So we're adjourned. Have a rest of the evening. We got up a little bit early today, so enjoy the rest of your evening, everyone. Thank you.

Thank you.

[INAUDIBLE], everybody. Thank you.