



REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Electronically Held

<https://youtu.be/x0I5hBAdpWc>

**BOARD OF
EDUCATION**

DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2021 7:00 P.M.

PRESIDENT

TIMOTHY O. ESTHEIMER

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage

VICE PRESIDENT

ANDREW A. GREEN

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

SECRETARY

DR. DARLENE L. POMPONIO

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Irvine, Baker-Herring, Wilson
(Due to a power outage, Mr. Estheimer was present and participated but had Mr. Green run the meeting.

TREASURER

JASON CRAIG

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
Mr. Green read the District Mission and Vision Statements.

TRUSTEES

NEIL J. FREITAS
RICK LAMOS
SHAWN SAGE

Ms. Irvine made the board aware of a power outage that has left several thousand without power, including two board members. She is concerned about our ability to hold this meeting under the Open Meetings Act and whether or not we really have our community able to attend and the board may want to consider whether it would be prudent to re-schedule this meeting.

Board members felt that we are following the OMA and due to our meeting being recorded, those without power could still view it at a later time on our website. All felt it was appropriate to continue the meeting.

ADMINISTRATION

REVISIONS/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

SUPERINTENDENT

SHARON IRVINE

2020/21-103 It was moved by Mr. Craig supported by Dr. Pomponio, the board accept the January 26, 2021 Regular Board Meeting Agenda.

BUSINESS AND FINANCE

DIRECTOR

BARBARA WILSON, CFO

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage
NO:

CURRICULUM/FEDERAL

PROGRAMS DIRECTOR

DR. MICHELLE BAKER-HERRING

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Jessica Gilley:

I am writing to you today, as both a Southgate parent AND as a Southgate school employee. I have two kids, one at Davidson and one at Anderson. I currently work in the food service department, normally serving the students at Anderson. I know these kinds of decisions you've had to make are difficult and even more difficult to please everyone. I just want to say that I am so happy you decided to let families, like mine, have a choice to send our kids back face to face. I just wanted to take a minute to share a little bit of how our first semester went with one of our children. He went from being an A/B student every single year, to suddenly a C/D/E student. He went from being a self-motivated student, to suddenly a child that had to, all but be threatened, to do school work. He went from a happy-go-lucky kid, to suddenly a withdrawn child, who barely leaves his room. He's not the same kid as he was on March 13 and before. I thank you for the opportunity to give back some normalcy and a hopeful turnaround in his academics and emotional well-being. It has been a heartbreaking transformation to witness this past year.

I also would like to take this time to encourage your consideration in changing the percentage for the metric at the high school. It makes no sense that a family with kids at all the various schools can send one to school but maybe no another, even though they live in the same house Both of my kids need to be in school. As a food service worker, our department has worked at least twice a week, every week, during the school year since March 16...sometimes it's been five days a week. Nobody complains because we love our job, love the kids and it's our job to provide meals. Why was that ok, but we have to keep "students and teachers" safe at home? I just think if it's o.k. for us, then it should be ok for teachers and students to return to all buildings. Thank you for your time.

Rhonda McClure:

Hello Southgate Board of Education. First, I want to thank you so much for your hard work and thoughtful responses to this pandemic. No plan will make everyone happy and I know our students' success and well being weighs heavily on all of you. You are so appreciated and I hope you all know that. My question/comment is regarding high school in person learning. My daughter is a senior and we chose to return face to face when that happens. However, I have heard some rumors that the in person students will be at their desks with a laptop while the teachers are at the front of the class, also on their laptop instructing both virtual and in person students at the same time. This is concerning to me because I am not sure how helpful this will be for in person students. If this is the case, what is the difference of in person and virtual learning for high school? As I said, this is something I have heard and I have no idea of the validity. If this is the case, can we make a change to our choice of learning from face to face back to virtual? I wish we would have had a better picture of the plan before making the commitment. Thank you for any information that can be provided. Again I appreciate all you do for our students. Thank you again!

Eric Timmons:

As a parent of a student and spouse to an Anderson High School educator, I worry about students and facility returning to in-person education. I understand that the board members have done their best to make sound and considerate decisions for the community. Furthermore I acknowledge the state and federal governments have provided little to no assistance to school districts across the land. None of this has been easy. Thank you for doing your best.

Governor Whitmer will make her State of the State address tomorrow. In an interview today she spoke of vaccinations being key to getting life back to some sort of normal, stating, "how we get our kids back in school is we get to that 70% mark that we are racing to meet." Yet many school districts, including our own, haven't made faculty vaccinations a part of the reopening plan. Instead we've only focused on the overall illness rates. Meanwhile employers across all industries have their employees working from home if it's reasonably possible -- just like teachers have been able to do.

We are in step 4 of the "Michigan Safe Start Plan" which explicitly calls for remote learning in K-12 and higher education.

Are we jeopardizing our community to increase test scores? What am I missing here?

PRESENTATIONS

None

SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE

Ms. Irvine gave the board a report of our current in-person status. Pictures were shared of classrooms settings, students and the protective measures in place to keep them safe. In-person participation so far; Elementary 762 or 71% of our elementary population and class sizes range from 11 to 20. Middle School 364 or 58% of our middle school population, class ranges-14 to 21. Remote participation; Elementary 315 students and Middle School has 263 students. The Atlas Program participation in the first semester for elementary was 146, second semester 105. Middle School Atlas participation was 85 in the first semester, 76 in the second semester. The High School has 199 participants in the first semester and 201 in the second semester.

CARES Act funds to date: \$1,924,257.48. These funds have been spent on; safety devices, building improvements, technology, additional staffing, cleaner/sanitizers and PPE. Amount of CARES Act fund encumbered or spent: \$1,820,646.04.

Ms. Irvine commended our staff for doing an exceptional job in these first few days. The staff has expressed appreciation that this first week was a half day schedule. This was an important consideration. We did do asynchronous for the first three days of our remote learning. We do have some large remote class sizes that we are looking to split up.

CONSENT

2020/21-104 It was moved by Dr. Pomponio supported by Mr. Lamos, the board approve the minutes from January 12, 2021 Closed Session, January 12, 2021 Regular Meeting and the HR Update.

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage
NO:

ACTION

1. Approval of Participation in, and Corresponding Counsel for, the ORS 3% FICA Closing Agreement with IRS: Ms. Irvine explained, for the past several years, ORS has tried to get a system-wide answer from the IRS on the proper tax treatment of employer and employee contributions made to the MSPERS Health Care Trust.

The ORS is currently working with the IRS to implement a Closing Agreement that will provide guidance through 2025 or 2026. ORS is asking Districts to sign onto the Agreement. Participation in this Closing Agreement will not impact whether or not the District will have to conform to the final IRS ruling; however, it will provide protection in the event that the IRS changed its position and tried to collect from Districts not included in the Agreement. No district in Wayne County withheld FICA from their 3% contributions, however, our participation will provide solidarity with those who did and are attempting to have those federal taxes released to them. It also protects us from our determination that this was in fact not taxable.

There is no cost to participate; ORS will cover all administrative fees associated with participation. However, the Board will have to approve the Power of Attorney transfer to the counsel representing ORS, W. Alan Wilk, with: Dykema-201 Townsend, Suite 900-Lansing MI 48933.

By approving this motion, the Board agrees to the District's participation in the Closing Agreement and accepts the legal representation of Dykema. Discussion took place about the current number of staff that participate in this and if there is a downside to switching legal counsel.

2020/21-105 It was moved by Dr. Pomponio supported by Mr. Craig, the board allow Southgate Schools Schools to participate in the Closing IRS Agreement that determines the taxability of the 3% contributions to the Health Care Trust. In so doing, the Board of Education accepts the legal representation of Dykema.

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage
NO:

2. Approval of the purchase of Heat Exchangers for the DMS Gym Air Handler: Ms. Irvine explained, according to board policy #5003, all items that exceed \$3,500 must be brought to the Board for approval. This purchase exceeds the required amount. We are requesting the approval of the purchase and installation of two Heat Exchangers in the amount of \$16,535 for the RTU 18 South Unit at Davidson Middle School through Allied General Mechanical, LLC.

This work was scheduled for the second bond program series. The unit is currently broken and unable to be permanently repaired without these units. This purchase will use bond money remaining from the 2015 bond program. Three quotes were collected to provide this repair and installation. The company, Allied General Mechanical, LLC, selected for the work produced the lowest quote.

Discussion took place about this company's reputation and the need for this repair now so we can be on schedule when the new units are installed in a few years with the new bond improvements.

2020/21-106 It was moved by Mr. Craig supported by Mr. Lamos, the board approve the purchase of two heat exchangers for the DMS gym air handler.

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage
NO:

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVES

None

INFORMATION/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Estheimer commented that he had the pleasure of walking through the buildings with Ms. Irvine and Mr. Green on Monday, the first day back. They were looking at class sizes, PPE and other areas parents brought up concerns. He is pleased to report that what they saw was as normal a day of school as you can have under these circumstances. Students were extremely well-behaved. Teachers and students were in really good spirits. He thanked Ms. Irvine for participating in that and the building administrators for all their hard work in getting their schools open in a quick fashion. He thanked the previous administration and the COLT team for getting everything aligned so we could have a really great start and thanked Ms. Irvine for seeing the vision through and getting the kids back with the help of those administrators.

Ms. Irvine commented this was definitely a team effort, everyone worked together to make this happen. It was a remarkable amount of coordination in pulling together the surveys for families.

Mr. Green commented that 99% of everything was good and gave kudos to everyone involved, past and current administration and custodial staff. There may be some small things to adjust to but that's why he and Mr. Estheimer took a look at what was going on. He thanked everyone.

Mr. Green announced this meeting will be adjourned and there will be another link to the work session immediately following this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

2020/21-107 It was moved by Mr. Craig supported by Mr. Sage the board adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage
NO:

WORK SESSION

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Irvine, Baker-Herring, Wilson

REVISIONS/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

2020/21-108 It was moved by Dr. Pomponio supported by Mr. Craig, the board approve the January 26, 2021 Work Session Agenda.

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage

NO:

Mr. Estheimer thanked the administration for having this work session, the continued conversation is helpful when making decisions. We have seen a couple of days of work and some data; this conversation will help give us a chance to talk about it openly about how we feel things are going or perhaps the direction we are going in.

DISCUSSION

1. Continuity of Learning Plan: Ms. Irvine began the discussion about the issues that have come up with the metric we are using and what average we are using; daily cases vs positivity rate and the percentage to use 5% or 9%.

Board members spoke about; the targeted number for the high school and letting parents have a choice. The percentage of those wanting their students to return-62% roughly 400+ want to return.

The board wanted all parents watching this work session to know, there would be no decisions made tonight about the high school returning to face to face. That will take place at the next board meeting, Feb 9, 2021.

Ms. Irvine presented the board with power point slides that reviewed our current metric:

- A weighted 14-average of Daily New Cases of Enrolling Districts
- Elementary and Middle School - 9 or fewer
- High School - 5 or fewer

A Harvard study; that experts in our nation are using currently, to decide what the appropriate COVID suppression metrics and strategies, measures the daily new case average risk assessment. This color coded chart rates the risk levels; the lowest risk level "green" with less than 1 daily new case per 100,000 people; "yellow" or medium risk, 1 to 10 daily new cases per 100,000 people; "orange" or high risk, 10 to 25 daily new cases per 100,000 people; up to the highest risk level "red" or critical, with 25 daily new cases per 100,000 people.

The question, is there meaningful difference in risk levels between 5 and 9 and would it be appropriate to set a date for the high school to return. It's something we can do because if we decided we were not going to differentiate under this metric, under this benchmark, then we could decide it has already been met and set the date for the high school return as soon as possible.

Other questions; what 14-day daily rate average is appropriate for the return of high school? How does our March 1 hard return factor in? How do we consider our school-associated cases?

A March 1 return does not mean we disregard the metric. If the board decides the first meeting in February, the soonest they could return would be after winter break.

School associated cases would be considered by the data from the local health department and the current risk level we are at. Right now we are a level "D"; if we have no cases, the recommendation is to consider reduced density with strict mitigation measures which we are doing at this time, and discuss additional strategies. If we end up having a few cases we would need to consider reduced density in affected buildings after cleaning/contact tracing. It is recommended if we got to where we saw a

building transmission we would want to make sure we considered remote instruction in the affected building. 28 days would be the recommended shutdown. Ms. Irvine shared the 14-day daily new case averages by School of Choice District/Municipality with the board. These numbers are from Wayne RESA and are updated by Wayne RESA staff. These numbers are not always updated in a consistent or timely manner. There will be some delays which are impacting the weighting average. The numbers went up to 8.9%, declined to 6.94% and then rose again. We are sitting at about 7.22% right now.

Discussion took place about the new variant and if the numbers have increased. The COLT team was asked their thoughts on a uniform number.

Mr. Lyons-Anderson High School principal commented that the high school is looking for some sort of certainty as to when we are going to be able to go back. Going back March 1 is definitely something they want, barring any increases in the rate of new cases. 62% of families are wanting to return to in-person. 426 chose remote, 431 chose in-person and 31 chose Atlas making it easier to practice social distancing.

Board members spoke about offering parents choices, safety protocols, making decisions based on science and the number that will be used to determine when the return of students to the high school. It was brought up that a recent CDC report indicates that the spread of the disease is not being attributed to schools.

Once we return parents can make the choice of going from in-person back to remote if they feel it is safer. It will be determined by class capacity if a parent can choose to go from remote to in-person. It was brought up that we are getting inconsistent messages from the state, federal and even the health department.

Discussion continued about whether there is scientific differences between 5% and 9%. Are we going to stay with 5% or move to 9% or even a 7%, 14-day average. We will need time to prepare for the return of students. Students will not have an open campus and the food service department will need time to order food. A closed campus will allow us to control the safety of students.

Board members repeated that they were not making decisions tonight and if there was a desire to change the %; that motion could be made at the next board meeting-Feb. 9, 2021. They will revisit the Continuation of Learning Plan at that time. This meeting was to help come up with some kind of direction to avoid confusion at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

2020/21-109 It was moved by Mr. Lamos supported by Mr. Sage the board adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage

NO:

Respectfully submitted by: Theresa Grzechowski

Dr. Darlene Pomponio-Secretary
Board of Education

