

KENNEWICK SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17  
SPECIAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING / Remote Board Meeting  
September 30, 2020

M I N U T E S

MEMBERS PRESENT

Board Members: Dawn Adams, President of the Board; Heather Kintzley, Vice President of the Board; Ron Mabry, Legislative Representative of the Board; Michael Connors, Board Member; Diane Sundvik, Board Member; Long Doan, Student Representative to the Board; and Dr. Traci Pierce, Superintendent and Secretary of the Board.

Cabinet Members: Dr. Doug Christensen, Associate Superintendent of Human Resources; Matt Scott, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Assessment and Professional Development; Jack Anderson, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education; Rob Phillips, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education; Vic Roberts, Executive Director of Business Operations; Robyn Chastain, Executive Director of Communications and Public Relations; Ron Cone, Executive Director of Information Technology.

Special Guest: Dr. Amy Person, Health Officer, Benton-Franklin Health District

CALL TO ORDER

President Dawn Adams called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance with approximately 998 staff and guests in attendance.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARENTS, STAFF, AND RESIDENTS

Matthew Luttrell, 1709 S. Curren St. Kennewick, shared that he is a teacher at Kamiakin High School, and he is concerned that the decision to move to hybrid is happening too soon. Mr. Luttrell reported that he surveyed approximately 75 of his students; many of his students said they were excited to get back to the classroom. Many felt schools were opening too soon and only 50% said they would actually wear a mask.

Nicole Clayton, 1724 W. 45<sup>th</sup> Ave. Trailer E40 Kennewick thanked all the Board members for their hard work and for bringing back the public comment section. Ms. Clayton added that the Board members are in a difficult position as they will never make everyone happy. Ms. Clayton commented that the District is not meeting any of the metrics laid out by the Benton-Franklin Health Department and that teachers and staff are not ready to move into the hybrid model.

Brian York, 99006 E. Clover Road Kennewick, shared that he is a physician at Kadlec and that when COVID began, everyone was worried about getting sick. Still, out of his commitment to the community, he had no option but to work. Mr. York shared that he feels the hybrid plan would allow schools to open safely and enable students to have a better educational experience. Mr. York noted that parents who have concerns about sending their children back to school have the option to go online. He stated that the union needs to recognize and acknowledge the quality of education they are providing.

Meg Zanol, 94505 E. Granada Ct. Kennewick, shared that she needs more information to decide about the Online Academy program. Ms. Zanol asked, “If November 20 is the next sign up for the Online Academy, what does her child do between October 12 to November 20.?”

Melissa Hulburt is a parent of a child who attends Kennewick High School. Ms. Hulburt would like to see other options other than the Online Acadamey for students who want to continue online learning.

Kathaleen Melville, 1709 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue Kennewick shared that she is a parent of a special needs Tier 3 child. Ms. Melville commented that there are no COVID cases with the 50 students currently meeting in gyms, and private schools in the area are open full time and are not seeing outbreaks at this time. Ms. Melville added that children’s IEP’s are not being meant; children who need that in-person learning should be able to opt to attend school. Her children want to go to school.

Micah Valentine, 3301 S. Lincoln Street Kennewick, asked for statistics and evidence that show children are dying or getting sick from COVID. Mr. Valentine asked the Board to follow the facts, as he stated there is zero evidence that children are getting sick or spreading COVID; he stated that more students died from suicide than COVID.

Sara Anderson, 289 Rachel Road Kennewick, expressed concerns that teachers have not been provided with proper PPE and that teachers are being assigned to clean and teach. Ms. Anderson asks where the District will get the PPE and where teachers and children will eat; the District has not provided those answers. Ms. Anderson noted, “If it is so safe, why are the Board meetings being done by Zoom meetings instead of meeting in person?”

Chris Retterer, 1211 W. 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue Kennewick, commented that he is more comfortable moving to hybrid once the metric is at 75. Mr. Retterer noted his concerns with the holidays and flu season coming up and not wanting to end up with a shutdown. Mr. Retterer added that IB programs are not eligible for Online Academy.

Jessica Sappington, 3622 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Kennewick, shared that she is a parent of a junior in the IB program and does not have the option to do the Online Academy.

Ronda Lauderdale, 2432 S. Arthur Court Kennewick, shared that she is a 6thgrade science teacher and stated that COVID is a virus that moves from host to host in a nanosecond. Ms. Lauderdale added that parents had not been fully informed that their students will be in a classroom eating breakfast and lunch and that teachers will be forced to eat in a room with 16 or more students who have their masks off.

Heather Schmidt, 3925 W. Okanagan Avenue Kennewick, shared that most people are not for going back to in-person learning as they want to be safer. Ms. Schmidt asked how the District will keep kids safe with COVID cases going up in the Tri-Cities.

Christine Lowery, 7926 W. Falls Place Kennewick, commented that people have just now adjusted to their schedules, and now they will have to change again. Ms. Lowery noted that cold symptoms would be looking like COVID; she wondered how will the District be able to distinguish between the two.

Brandy Strait, 1913 S Lyle Street Kennewick, shared that she is a parent of kids who go to public schools and is concerned about the student and staff safety. Ms. Strait asked how the District would keep children six feet apart and how they would enforce the wearing of masks.

## REPORTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### School Reopening Planning

Superintendent Dr. Traci Pierce reviewed information and decisions made at the September 16, 2020 Board meeting.

Special guest, Dr. Amy Person, Health Officer Benton-Franklin Health District, shared information about the Health District's recommendation for schools to transition to hybrid learning. Dr. Person explained that the Department of Health decision tree includes not only a number, but a broad array of factors when considering moving from online learning to hybrid learning. Consideration also has to include health; impact on students who cannot learn remotely; unstable households; social and emotional impacts; and child abuse. Dr. Person reported that a body of evidence that has led the Benton-Franklin Health District to continue recommend transitioning to the hybrid model, even though the disease rate is not yet at the 75 rate level. She stated that case rates have dropped since July, and hospitalization rates have also dropped from double digits to single digits and, in some cases, zero. Dr. Person explained that all of these factors led to the current recommendation. Dr. Person added that there is now a broader understanding of the virus, and she stated that younger children and teenagers are much less susceptible to the disease and less likely to spread it. She stated that what is clear now, is that the most critical factors for returning children to school are the mitigation safety protocols. If schools maintain physical distancing, ensure wearing face coverings, focus on hand washing, and focus on rapid identification of close contact, risk levels are low for schools. Dr. Person noted that there will be some cases of COVID, whether students return to school or not, due to exposure elsewhere. Schools have not been identified as a more risky. She emphasized that the Department of Health guidance is designed to provide a guide for when to move forward to hybrid learning and in-person learning; it is not intended to be used as a guide for when to move back. She explained that decisions about whether to close schools will be based on any outbreaks they may occur at an individual school or within individual classrooms.

Mr. Connors commented that the health department's website's information shows the epi curve demonstrated a large peak in July but is now showing some plateauing. Mr. Connors noted that evidence from private schools is not showing outbreaks.

Mr. Mabry asked if students take exposure home to grandparents. Dr. Person replied that children are not the primary spreaders.

Ms. Sundvik asked about middle school and high school students who move to different classrooms throughout the day. Dr. Person responded that older children's risk does increase with more movement and exposure to more students.

Ms. Kintzley asked if Dr. Person anticipates the testing positivity rate to continue trending in the same direction. Dr. Person replied that she believes the rates will continue to decline. Dr. Person added that she believes with the District's mitigation protocols in place, based on research, the District would not see a significant increase in cases.

Mr. Mabry asked about age groups that do not transmit this virus to others. Dr. Person reported that studies show children ten and under do not seem to transmit the virus while some data shows children over ten act more like adults; studies have been mixed.

President Adams asked, "If the District goes forward with hybrid, will there be criteria or some definition for closing schools again; where do we draw the line?" Dr. Person replied that she would not anticipate school closure district-wide due to the mitigation measures the District currently has in place unless we saw a rise in cases similar to what we saw in May or June.

Ms. Sundvik asked Dr. Person about her comments regarding having plateaued, when back in September, the numbers were at sixty, and now they are at one-hundred. Dr. Person replied that by plateau, she meant the numbers are flat instead of going up and down. She stated that they see the increases being linked more to specific events, such as private gatherings associated with many cases.

Mr. Mabry commented that it looks like half the school population can pass the virus on to someone else. Dr. Person replied that anyone who can transmit is a concern. High school-aged students and adults are a concern, but they can better understand social distancing and wearing masks. The larger concern would be younger students, as they are less likely to understand the importance of social distancing and wearing a mask. For the hybrid model to succeed, safety protocols have to be followed.

Ms. Sundvik asked about the Idaho School district seeing a sudden increase of 134 students and five staff quarantined; she asked if Dr. Person sees that happening in our school district. Dr. Person commented that mitigation measures would need to be followed and stated that Idaho has been more permissive with things around masking and social distancing at the community level.

Dr. Pierce reported that high school students in the hybrid model would not be able to stay with the same teacher and the same group of classmates. Dr. Person replied that the cohorting is to limit potential transmitting. She stated that, while it will be a higher risk having different groups of students and teachers, again it is the the mitigation protocols that are so important. Dr. Person explained that we have learned since having student in classrooms is that school can occur and has been successful.

Ms. Sundvik commented that the Tri-Tech Skills Center could have cross-contamination

with students from other districts. Dr. Person replied that anytime you have people coming together from different Districts, it would be better if we were in that seventy-five range; however, it's a balance.

President Adams thanked Dr. Person for attending the Board meeting and answering all the questions.

Ms. Sundvik asked if students would be receiving less time in specials. Dr. Pierce replied that specials would be about 15 minutes longer in a typical year. Mr. Phillips, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary, shared that there would be fifty minutes of specials four days a week in a typical year, and during hybrid learning, specials would be thirty minutes four days per week.

Dr. Doug Christensen, Associate Superintendent of Human Resources, reported on the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). The legislation allows employees to take up to twelve weeks of paid leave (2/3 pay) for COVID-related reasons, including child care. The District has employees who have said they would consider taking the twelve weeks leave should schools open in a hybrid model, which will likely put stress on our sub-pools. Dr. Christensen stated that he couldn't yet predict how many employees would take the leave.

Dr. Christensen reported that the District would like to survey the parents regarding how many would not be sending their children to in-person schooling and use the data to see about remote type teaching. The District also needs hard data showing how many staff will be choosing to take the twelve-week leave. Dr. Christensen noted that many districts have had to lay-off classified employees, and our District has tried hard not to do that.

Ms. Sundvik asked if the employees could use their sick leave to make up the difference in pay should they choose to use the FFCRA.

Dr. Christensen replied that the FFCRA is written for 2/3 pay, and any use of sick leave to make up the difference in pay would be a bargaining issue.

Dr. Pierce reported that the YMCA would provide before and after school daycare at all elementary schools, with support from Kennewick School District transportation. The YMCA will also offer daycare on Wednesdays and for children on their alternate AA/BB days at two locations and possibly a third.

Matt Scott, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Assessment and Professional Development, reported that large groups of people, including teachers from all levels, met over the summer to develop lessons around wearing a mask, social and emotional learning, social stories, and positive intervention plans.

Ms. Sundvik asked if there would be any support available at the secondary level. Mr. Scott replied that there would be supports at all levels K-12, as well as supports for staff.

Dr. Pierce reported that the district received new information today from Labor and

Industries (L & I) regarding face mask requirements in school settings. She explained that the regular school classroom setting is designated low risk, and cloth face coverings continue to be the standard as specified by L & I. She also stated that some District employees designated as completing high risk tasks would be receiving N-95 masks for use when completing those tasks.

Dr. Pierce summarized that this is a situation no one asked for, and no one has had to figure out before. She indicated that all District staff and the Board is doing their best to make decisions. She stated that, ideally, the District would like nothing more than to have options that meet the needs and desires of all families and staff. Dr. Pierce added that the emails from staff and families indicated that about half want schools to transition to hybrid and about half do not, with many families expressing they would like a choice between staying in remote or moving to hybrid

President Adams shared that she read all the emails, and they are about split. She indicated that no matter what decision the Board makes, some will feel like a winner, and some will feel like a loser. She went on to state that a well thought out plan usually takes two years, and the District hasn't had that kind of time. Ms. Adams added that new data is continually coming in, making it hard to provide stability, but we need to aim for it.

Ms. Kintzley commented that Dr. Person shared that it comes down to the District having mitigation protocols in place. Ms. Kintzley noted that Dr. Person shared that K-5 students are not likely to transmit the virus amongst themselves, whereas grades 6-12 are more likely to transmit, but are better at understanding social distancing and the wearing of masks. Ms. Kintzley asked if the District should explore K-5 only to start with or if the District feels they have safety measures for all grades.

Dr. Pierce replied that schools have had students onsite along with teachers and Tier-3 students. The District has been tracking every case of COVID-19 since August, before school started. Eight staff members have tested positive for COVID. Dr. Pierce shared that the District has the appropriate PPE, and she is confident with the District's hybrid model.

Ms. Kintzley shared that the Board had expressed their concerns that there is a time limit element to this, to get everything ready for a workable program. The Board doesn't want to put the District in a bind. Ms. Kintzley asked Dr. Pierce to level with the Board if she needs more time.

Dr. Pierce expressed that she appreciates the Board not wanting to put the District in a bind. She went on to state that the challenge is not directly related to time, as even if the District waited four weeks to open schools, the District is still going to have secondary students mixing in the cohort, and there would still be families and staff that don't want to return to hybrid. Dr. Pierce shared that she believes after hearing from the Special Education department, that having a little more time to bring Tier2 students on site would be helpful. She stated that having more time would help teachers prepare for the transition to hybrid learning. She stated it would also give the District more time to seek information from families who want to continue to have a remote only option, seek information from staff who plan to take leave, and determine possible options for families and staff.

Ms. Kintzley asked if October 12 and 19 might be better instead of October 5 and 12 for bringing students back school. Ms. Kintzley wondered if there is a reason why the District couldn't bring all students back on October 12 and wondered about the benefit of having phase 2.

Dr. Pierce stated that the District was open to changing the original phase plan.

Ms. Kintzley replied that best-laid plans are often adjusted with new information

President Adams commented on the need to focus on secondary students' options and possibly having elementary students go back to school first.

Mr. Mabry reminded the Board that parents don't want students on different schedules with some of their children in school and some at home.

President Adams asked if the Board would like to revisit their decision for opening school on October 5 and 12.

Mr. Connors shared that he would be against changing the vote as he feels the Board needs to continue to move forward; children need to be back in school. Mr. Connors added that he would support Dr. Pierce and her staff if they need another week or two to put together the best possible program for our children.

President Adams shared that she received emails from staff saying they don't have the PPE equipment needed to start school.

Dr. Pierce shared that the District meets weekly with KEA, and when those things come up, they address the situation. She stated that there is also a reporting system for people to report anonymously if people are not wearing a mask or social distancing to address the situation with the employee.

Mr. Mabry asked if the principals or someone from each building could give the Board a "state of readiness." The Board would like to know that the PPE is in place, not that it is going to be delivered.

Dr. Pierce stated that the District would be able to get a building by building report for the Board.

President Adams asked if there is a better time for students and staff to go to hybrid.

Mr. Connors shared that he is good if the staff needs another week or two, but he would be against taking us down the road another month. Mr. Connors added that COVID numbers are never going to get to zero.

President Adams stated that she agrees that science is one element, but readiness is clearly on our shoulders. Whether it takes one week or one month, I want us to be ready. Dr. Pierce

needs to state with confidence that buildings will be ready to open with the correct PPE.

Mr. Mabry asked if schools would have access to the rapid test?

Dr. Pierce explained that she would need to verify that. She explained that earlier in the summer, when an employee tested positive, the Health District provided rapid tests, but she was unsure if those tests are still available to the District.

Dr. Pierce went on to say that, based on the conversation, one possibility would be to have Tier2 students begin on October 12 and have elementary students begin on October 19.

Mr. Mabry asked if October 19 was to start both elementary and secondary students.

Ms. Kintzley added that she agrees with Mr. Mabry that it is hard for families to have some children go to school, and some stay home.

Ms. Sundvik shared that she has great concerns about the older students, including Tri-Tech students going back to school.

Long Doan, Student Representative to the Board, asked if the only alternative was the Online Academy.

Dr. Pierce replied that the only current alternative is the Online Academy program, and that the District would be exploring other possible “remote only” options. Dr. Pierce provided one option of starting with Tier2 students on October 12 and everyone else on October 26 or another option to start Tier2 students on October 12, elementary students on October 19, and secondary students on November 2.

A motion was made by Diane Sundvik to change the starting date of students to hybrid learning to October 12 for Tier2 students, October 19 for elementary students, and November 2 for secondary students.

Seconded by Ron Mabry.

Ms. Kintzley shared that decision to change the start date to hybrid learning is being made on the administration's recommendation that more time would allow the District to better ready themselves to make a successful transition.

Mr. Mabry asked if the Board could have the PPE information by the next board meeting?

Dr. Pierce replied that the information would be available at the next Board meeting.

Roll call vote:	Adams	Yes
	Kintzley	Yes
	Mabry	Yes
	Connors	no response – lost internet connection
	Sundvik	Yes



Motion carried 4-0.

Ms. Sundvik thanked Dr. Pierce and her staff for working so hard.

Mr. Mabry agreed with Ms. Sundvik in thanking Dr. Pierce, and her staff for all their hard work.

There being no further business, the Board adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

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RECORDING SECRETARY

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PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

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SECRETARY OF THE BOARD

Approved: October 7, 2020