

# COVID-19 Task Force

## Parent Focus Group

May 13, 2021

**Facilitator and Notetaker:** Polly Bove, Superintendent; Rachel Zlotziver, Coordinator of Communications

**Attendees:** Ben Clausnitzer, Bill Wilson, Christine Pepin, David Cohen, Dawn Ying, Derek Lee, Graham Clark, Jasmina Shah, Jennifer Shearin, Kami Tomberlain, Maria Dulay, Peter Chu, Saranya Vasu, Sharlene Liu, Smita Dhingra, Sonya Patel, Stacey Morse

The notes that follow are thoughts and comments that stood out during the discussion, this document is not meant to be a transcript. While prepared questions were utilized to structure the conversation, the direction was defined by parent input.

### **What have we learned in hybrid and distance learning? What do we want to keep? Are there some tech tools we should continue with?**

- Feedback gathered from parents at Homestead:
  - Asynchronous Wednesday worked well for many and provided a breather for students to catch up on their work, and some students seemed to be more well rested (most of the group agreed with this feedback).
  - Having electronic curriculum available for students that miss school is helpful.
  - Remote office hours worked well for easy access/quick questions that students had.
  - Parents also liked the ability to have Zoom meetings with teachers and staff (most parents in the group echoed this).
  - Parents liked the free lunches and would like to see this continue if possible.
- Free lunch for all students was a positive, there seemed to be less stigma about all kids being able to get lunch together easily with no distinction.
- Free lunch also helps as incentive for closed campus.
- Appreciated the higher-than-normal level of communication from both school sites and district – email is the best method, and particularly enjoyed Principals sharing inspiration for the day alongside critical information
- Thumbs up on the amount of communication, but with that higher volume some things can get missed. It would be helpful to label communications as “action item” or “informational.”
- An increase in physical activity for students will be crucial if distance learning has to continue for some reason.
- Clarification question: Is it possible that asynchronous Wednesday would continue? If that does happen, please give families the option for students to go five days a week.
  - Polly: That is unlikely with our instructional minutes requirement.
- Free lunch has contributed to a positive community for the students back on campus, but the food servings are not enough for some students.
- Asynchronous Wednesday was positive for students to have a break, slow down and have time to work on coursework. Free lunch seems to be an incentive for students who are coming in person.
- Asynchronous Wednesdays allow students to get enough sleep and did remove some of the pressure of high school. The focus on Advisory lessons and curriculum that isn’t purely academic has also been positive.
- Would it be possible to have all lectures recorded or notes provided? Some teachers do this effectively. This allows students to pay more attention in class to the lecture but not have to struggle to write everything down/take notes while listening.

- Polly: Technologically this is not as easy as it seems, but there might be some strategies teachers could use.
- Some students like the longer blocks of time in the current schedule with fewer classes during the week.
  - Polly: We are working with staff right now on the schedule, and are proposing the continuation of a block, universal schedule across the district for the next year at least.
- Right now, we have zoom licenses for every student, are we keeping those in the Fall?
  - Graham: We are currently working on the contract to extend this for at least one year.
- Having a less structured day in the middle of the week was really helpful. The flexibility has been positive for many households.
- Testing from home was very difficult for students (AP testing, etc.). Can another alternative be found if distance learning were to continue?
- There is a concern from some parents (even though most are largely positive about coming back) about having a contingency plan for the Fall in case COVID cases surge again. There is a minority of students that may not be able to go back to campus because of medical or other issues, and those families want to make sure the alternative is a good one.
  - Polly: We have a very robust alternative program that provides support for students that need a different option from the comprehensive high schools. We are prepared to handle those students, whether it is COVID-related or not, and we know there will be individual conversations with families in these situations to address unique challenges and situations. Our priority is in-person, but we will have other options available. If you have any suggestions about how we would ask parents questions about this issue, please let us know. We don't want to imply it is simply a choice for everyone or that the alternative option would be school as they experienced at a comprehensive high school pre-COVID.
  - Suggestions that the wording be very specific, using words like "exception" or "exemption" and possibly request a doctor's note. Be clear that this is a special cohort, not a mainstream option. Suggestion of using Educational Options as example/model, being clear that families know they will no longer be a Cupertino student for example, or have Cupertino teachers.
- Students may have increased need for mental health services.
  - Polly: We are at the ready for that and have been anticipating that, but we feel like we're doing a pretty good job meeting the needs that we are seeing right now.
  - Principal Tomberlain: We can teach a lot (coping skills, other strategies) to students directly, which then reduces the number of students that might need more specialized services.

### **How do we support student social-emotional learning and make meaning out of the 1.5 years of pandemic?**

- Something about folks getting back into a routine on campus has been super helpful. After the first week or ten days, people seem more comfortable.
- Eighth graders missed out on everything fun, what can we do to remind them that school is fun when all they've had for a year and a half is academics?
  - Polly: ASB folks and Activities APs are thinking about a variety of activities to welcome students in the Fall.
  - Principal Clausnitzer: We might do orientation with both grades 9 and 10, as well as other events distanced in the quad, for instance a movie night in the quad with grab-and-go food and masks.
  - Trustee Bill Wilson: Our students are a great resource for this and very creative in thinking of ways to still have events and create a sense of fun and pride in the schools.
- With students missing the rallies, playing music at the games, etc. – they need these things as a mental boost to get excited about coming back.
- Can you do more frequent mental health check/screening when we come back in the Fall for all students - as a first step to get a baseline? Staff and administrators can use that information to confidentially reach out to those students that are struggling.

- Parents don't know how to help their children with mental health issues, eating disorders, etc. Any help in this area is appreciated.
- Suggestion that there could be a short school wide survey: 1. What is hardest part of last 1.5 years, 2. What was the best part? This could be shared in an anonymous but public way with students across the district – as a type of group therapy.

**In addition to our current methods, how might we communicate the safety protocols that our District employs?**

- Parents want statistics to be made public on staff/student vaccination rates and positive COVID cases.
  - Polly: We can't ask people if they are vaccinated unless/until legislation changes and it's just not possible for us to test all kids. We've only had two positive cases related to in-person instruction and those affected have been notified per our protocols.
  - Can you post a weekly report on COVID cases on the website for all families?
    - Polly: I'm hesitant to commit to that today, there are multiple considerations around this data including privacy issues.
- Clarification question: You cannot require students to be vaccinated?
  - Polly: That is correct.
- Could you require students who aren't vaccinated to be tested?
  - Polly: We can't ask people to prove that they are vaccinated in order to do that. Legislation would have to be passed to address this, and that would only be after FDA approval for continued/permanent use (vs. emergency authorization).
- There has been a lot of positive encouragement to come back to school. It would be helpful if you explained to families why you believe it's safe for students to return to school instead of referring families to outside information.
  - Polly: The CDC and public health department websites get updated so quickly so that is why we link to outside websites and make sure we are giving the most up to date, correct information.
- Sharing data on positive cases could help address some of the rumors and false information out there among families.
- Could you voluntarily ask people to say if they are vaccinated? Stanford has done this.
  - Polly: Our legal guidance has been that we should not do this.
- The positive comments on vaccination are much appreciated. Any other efforts to publicize and encourage students and families would be helpful, including student testimonials.
- Students that have gotten vaccinated have been so happy to go out and see friends and it has given families peace of mind.

**Closing Comments**

- Encouraging the district and community to plan for success. Hope that things will be back to normal in light of the CDC info that came out today. Hoping there will be no reason to wear masks or police social distancing, and that we are focused on getting students excited about going back to school.
- Parents have appreciated hearing from other families whose students are back in school about how safe it feels.
- With only two positive cases related to in-person instruction and no further spread, the protocols are working and we are doing a good job of keeping students safe. This is important for people to know.