



BOARD BRIEFS

Authored by the Davis School District Community Relations Department

District establishes COVID-19 protocols for school year “Big Five,” contact tracing, dashboard and Test to Stay continue

The Davis School District will continue following COVID-19 safety protocols during the 2021-22 school year, Assistant Superintendent John Zurbuchen told the Board of Education Tuesday.

While some measures have been modified due to legislation regarding face masks, procedures implemented for COVID-19 have proven effective in preventing the spread of infection, Zurbuchen said.

The district will continue the “Big Five” approach — encouraging people to stay home when sick, continuing hygiene etiquette, physical distancing where possible, cleaning and disinfecting and encouraging the wearing of face masks.

“We as an administration and school board do not have the authority to be able to mandate masks,” said Zurbuchen. “It does not mean that face masks cannot be worn in school. We will continue to encourage them. We know that face masks are an important mitigating strategy for COVID-19.”

Zurbuchen mentioned that while there is no mandate to wear face coverings in the district, there may be times when a bus route requires masks to be worn, such as field trips to Starbase on Hill Air Force Base. Schools will inform parents beforehand when those situations arise. If parents do not want their children to wear masks, those stu-

dents will remain at school.

During the school year, when a COVID-19 positive case is identified by the Davis County Health Department, that individual will remain at home in isolation for 10 days and must be symptom-free before returning to school, Zurbuchen said.

School COVID-19 aides will also conduct contact tracing. Students exposed to someone with the virus within three feet distance for longer than 15 minutes will be given the option to return to school if they are fully vaccinated for COVID-19 or if both individuals were wearing masks. The exposed student can also return to school if they have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days or they were wearing a N95 or KN95 mask, even if the person who tested positive was not wearing a mask.

The district will also continue publishing a COVID-19 dashboard, viewable on the district website with number of positive cases identified over a 14-day period at each school. It will be updated every morning, Monday through Friday, with information provided by the health department.

Zurbuchen said Test to Stay events will also be implemented if a school reaches a COVID-19 outbreak threshold of 2 percent of students and staff for a school of more than 1,500 or 30 students and staff for a school of 1,500 or less. Only students who receive a negative test during the Test to Stay event may return to school.

Board approves tax increase to raise teacher salaries

The Board of Education of the Davis School District voted 6-to-1 to approve a tax increase following a public hearing where nearly 40 county residents weighed in on the proposal.

The majority of the tax increase will be used to increase teacher pay getting district teachers closer to what others are paid in neighboring districts.

Davis School District Business Administrator Craig Carter explained that the Legislature adopted an equal-

ization program several years ago that guarantees school districts a certain amount of revenue. This funding helps to “equalize” property tax revenue among school districts so that a child’s education funding is not based on where they live. As the value of property goes up, the leeway automatically floats down to provide the same revenue as the prior year. After five years, the Board of Education must vote to bring that leeway back up to continue to receive that guarantee or receive less revenue.

The tax increase returns the

District to those minimum levels and averts a \$7.8 million loss of state revenue for school year 2021-22.

Carter said the \$7.8 million covers the \$1,500 salary adjustment for teachers who have worked beyond the provisional period of three years. Another \$1.3 million will be used to make a salary adjustment for all employees.

He also noted that the notice homeowners received from the county states that taxes on a \$403,000 home will increase \$183.74 per year.

Carter explained, however, that

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Literacy programs help close educational gap

The district continues its goal of ensuring every student is literate through supplemental reading programs and professional educator training.

This summer, select kindergarten through third-grade students participated in a reading program where small groups of students met regularly with an online teacher. The program included nearly 200 teachers helping over 1,500 students focus on core phonics.

“Preliminary numbers show that kids made gains, especially some of the kids that were in the lowest category where that one-on-one practice made a big difference for them,” Davis School District Humanities Director Julie Barlow told board members.

Over 200 elementary teachers in the district have voluntarily begun Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), a professional learning experi-

ence for educators.

Nearly 1,000 kindergarten through third-grade teachers will begin training this fall with national trainers from the program, funded by the state. The district will fund training for fourth-through sixth-grade teachers, special education teachers, psychologists and English language art instructors.

“We want them to really understand the newest and the best research on how we learn to read because it’s very different, we are finding out, than how kids learn to speak,” said Barlow.

“They don’t acquire language the same way in those two things,” she said. “This new framework will really equip a lot of our teachers to know exactly what a kid is missing in every grade so that hopefully, by the time a kid leaves third grade, they are literate. And if not, then our fourth through sixth-grade teachers are trained to keep helping with that.”

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because the district’s debt tax rate is falling as existing debt is paid off, the increase will be closer to \$60.95 per year on a \$403,000 home.

Following the public comment, Board Member Liz Mumford said she appreciated the thoughtful way that the public presented their opinions. She said she and other board members took lots of notes and recognized that they need to do a better job of sharing the budget process and priorities with the community.

Indicating that she would be voting no, Board Member Cheryl Phipps said she was frustrated with legislators who put the burden on property tax poor districts like Davis.

“I have a problem until we work on equalizing property taxes the way we have equalized income taxes,” Phipps said. “... For me a remedy needs to be more of a conversation with legislators that this five year time we were given to increase our taxes ... is something that should be looked at.”

Board President John Robison said he agreed that a conversation needs to take place at the legislative level, but in the meantime the district should not lose millions of dollars.

“And it’s not that we’re going to lose those dollars. It’s that it’s going to directly come back and affect our

students,” he said.

“The last thing we want to see is our constituency members suffer,” Robison continued. “I think it has to be two things: One, I think we need to continue to support the increase that allows us to get the funding from the state. And secondly, and very important, is for all of us ... to continue to work with our legislators to continue to get the changes you are talking about.”

In other business, the board approved:

- The 2021-22 tentative budget of \$860 million.

- The American Rescue Plan and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund application to the state, which outlines the use of \$42 million in funds. Assistant Superintendent John Zurbuchen said the district did all it could to ensure that every parent had the opportunity to weigh in on the priorities.

That was accomplished with a survey that was distributed to employees and parents with about 10.2 percent of those two groups completing the survey. Class-size reduction and classroom learning aides were clearly top priorities. The proposal for the use of those funds includes:

- Class-size reduction.
- Classroom learning aides —

one for every grade level in elementary and one for every core subject in secondary schools.

- Online and summer school classes for the next two summers.

- Offering nursing staff the opportunity to increase to full-time status for the next two years.

- A stipend to teachers to help with the extra time required to assist a student absent due to COVID-19.

- Personalized learning assistance which includes technology and training for teachers.

- Air handler improvements in some older school buildings.

- Special program funding to help underrepresented groups, including special education, 504, homeless and ESL students.

- A small change to the policy regarding school board meetings to clarify one line which indicated that comments could be directed at the superintendent or board member if approved by the presiding board member.

The policy committee felt that line was confusing and led residents to believe a dialogue would take place during public comment. Questions asked during public comment will be addressed with the individual after the meeting.

New social studies curriculum adopted

The district finalized a new social studies curriculum following an eight-month review process.

A committee made up of educators and parents representing all of the district's geographic regions reviewed curriculum options. After conducting three rounds of review, the selected material was made available through a virtual open house for the public.

Davis School District Teaching and Learning Director Belinda Kuck told the Board of Education that ABC-CLIO has been selected to provide the curriculum that has been adopted by the district.

Social studies teachers are now being trained on the curriculum, she said, and the material will be incorporated into Canvas for students and parents.

"Our teachers have been trained to help students use this resource to deepen thinking and improve civic engagement and civil discourse with one another in the classroom," Kuck said.

Superintendent Reid Newey said it's been 12 years since the social studies material in the district has been updated, back when curriculum was based on one text and a workbook to parallel the text.

"Now we are adopting databases that are massive, that go out to different sources," Newey said.

"It is going to be a continual work for a while where we may need to revisit it in terms of a source or a phrase here or there, but we have to teach social studies, not a limited view of what one particular group views as necessary."

Board swears in student members



Kaylee Cardenas, a senior at Northridge High, and Trevor Nelson, a senior at Farmington High are sworn in by Business Administrator Craig Carter as student board members for the 2021-22 school year.

Cardenas has served as a member of the HOPE squad and Latinos in Action. She is currently the student body vice president at Northridge High.

Nelson has played drums for five years at Centennial Junior High and Farmington High. He currently runs for the Farmington High varsity cross country and track and field teams.