

School Board President Report

Jake Wyland

Sep 20, 2021

We are nearing the one month mark of school being in session for the 2021-2022 school year, and it has been wonderful to see students back in our classrooms each and every day. We implemented the universal mask requirement for all students, staff and visitors ahead of the mandate set forth from the commonwealth, and have seen success with participation from the start. I know that our community wants what is best for our students and adherence to this policy is one of the layered mitigation strategies that will continue to allow us to welcome students in-person, each day.

Last week, we were able to unanimously approve the Cafeteria Collective Bargaining Agreement and tonight, I am pleased to consider the custodial/maintenance collective bargaining agreement this evening. This agreement was negotiated fairly for both our valued employees, and our taxpayers in this community.

Lastly, I am excited to learn more following the District wide communication that went out on Friday, regarding the COVID Testing in schools. Dr. Davis and Mrs. Deanna Hess have completed the next step in the onboarding process by completing a profile for each of the buildings, ordering materials, and generating the links to opt-in to the program that you saw in the letters. Each school has a unique access code. We hope to be ready to begin the pool testing next week.

Class Size:

We have heard the concerns raised by parents through conversations, emails and public presentations.

As a Board, we have charged the Administration with living up to our Mission of providing the best education possible for each and every student and doing so in a way that upholds our fiduciary responsibility to the community.

One of the great attributes of our district are our small walkable neighborhood schools each unique in character and identity. However, unique neighborhood schools make it nearly impossible to have class sizes across all grades and buildings.

In hearing from Dr. Steinhauer and his team, I understand that each year prior to school they work to balance resources across the entire district. It is admittedly an inexact science, where

some classes in a given year end up at the lower end of the size spectrum and some end up at the larger end.

The calculus of when a class is too large is not as simple as a head count. It includes the age of the kids, and the strength of the teachers.

Ultimately, it is up to our administrators to balance all of those interests and make the call on how to deploy those resources. Parents have raised a flag, and we as a Board have asked for further explanation from the Administration. What we have heard back in response is that the principal and teachers - here are confident in their ability to handle these classes as currently configured; they advocate that adding another section would be a disruption; they support their position with reference to academic studies on the issue; and operationally they have added a licensed teacher to aide these two classes.

Dr. Steinhauer and his team are our resident public education experts. And they have committed to us that they can get the job done with resources deployed in this way. Based on the information we have been provided I do not see justification for the Board to second guess the Administration's judgement in this matter.