

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

SPECIAL CLOSED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

**360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102**

**March 5, 2022
1:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m. by Jim Vue, Chair.

II. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: J. Vue, U. Ward, J. Kopp, H. Henderson, Z. Ellis, C. Allen, J. Foster
Superintendent Gothard

C. Long, S. Dahlke

III. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA

MOTION: It was moved by Director Vue, and seconded by Director Ellis, to approve the main order of the agenda.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Kopp	Yes
Director Ellis	Yes
Director Foster	Yes
Director Henderson	Yes
Director Ward	Yes

IV. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Review of Resolution Adopting a Saint Paul Public Schools Resolution Regarding the Use of Masks in all Saint Paul Public School Settings

Superintendent Gothard welcomed Mary Langworthy, Director of Health and Wellness, to present on this topic. Information shared included a situation update on COVID-19, layered strategies for mitigation, end to contact tracing, COVID-19 booster requirement, COVID-19 testing updates, updated guidance from the CDC, proposed changed to the mask mandate resolution, details on if masking requirement is approved, and links to resources.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

- Do we expect a similar surge after Spring Break, and what is the implementation date?
Response: We do expect cases to increase after Spring Break, but we do have the tools for support. We don't expect it to be as big as in January, which was more due to Omicron than Winter Break. The current resolution does say that it will be effective as of 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, March 9 pending approval.
- Has there been any specific studies around school districts and the fact that our buildings have more people than any other building day after day and the impact of that with masks? Response: There have not been specific studies done, but when we look at surrounding districts that have made the shift away from masks, we have learned from them and what went well. We do have other strategies in place, including a 10-day isolation, social distancing, access to testing, and offering options for vaccines. We know when there are low community case rates that there is less risk and less likelihood for transmission.
- Board members noted that they recognize the mitigation opportunities, and that social distancing and masks are two major ones; social distancing is more difficult in school settings so we have masks to fall back on. They also noted that in 2 years it is disappointing that there are not studies that show rates or statistics within classrooms or lunchrooms.
- The rate of 50% of elementary students was noted, and the responsibility of the Board to keep the students in this district safe.
- The point in which we do shift was noted, especially with low community case rates, as well as challenges to wearing masks.
- PPE for those who are immunocompromised or working with immunocompromised students was discussed, as well as the role of the health offices in proactively supporting students to reduce the spread.
- How long has the vaccine been available for the 5-11 age group? Response: Since about October 2021, and before Thanksgiving.
 - For those families, it seems as though they have already made their decision for vaccines for their family.
- In thinking about Bridgeview and Focus Beyond, where some students may not be able to wear a mask, they depend on the adults around them to mitigate their risk. Have we considered the possibility of masks that are optional except when working with students who cannot wear a mask? Response: We did have a similar discussion with senior leadership on variations of the proposal, and through the discussion, it would be challenging to manage the enforcement in a situation such as that. It is the challenge of implementation is certain staff need to wear a mask and others do not.
- A board member noted hearing from staff in buildings concerns about the availability of masks for students. Response: Masks are plentiful and sometimes there is a communication break at the building level, but they are readily available for the entire school year and for students.
- More details were requested on outreach in areas of the city where vaccine rates may be lower. SPPS has been engaging the community on vaccine opportunities, and scheduling in areas where they may be gaps. There is an upcoming vaccine opportunity with Saint Paul Music Academy that will have a Karen community focus.
- Further details were also requested in helping families to mitigate risk so that we don't lose families, and the impacts on enrollment to the online school if masks are optional. Details were also provided on homebound instruction for those students who qualify.
- More information as requested on the demographics of those who test positive, because families of color are disproportionately affected.

- The timing of the switch was also discussed, with ideas such as the start of the new school year.
- Hesitation was noted about the start date of Wednesday March 9, with apprehension around the possible increase of case rates following Spring Break.
- Communication and comfort of families was also discussed, as well as the impacts of warmer weather and outside time.
- Administration also provided rationale for the mask mandate changes, including CDC guidance, speech and language development, and mental health.
- Case rates in neighboring districts that have changed their masking practices were also discussed.

V. MOTION TO CLOSE MEETING

MOTION: It was moved by Director Vue and seconded by Director Ward and Director Foster that the Board of Education close the special meeting and continue the meeting as a closed meeting to consider strategy for labor negotiations, including negotiation strategies, developments, discussion, and review of labor negotiation proposals for all bargaining units, including ASAP, Educational Assistants, Machinists, Nutrition Services Personnel, Principals, School and Community Service Professionals, Teachers, MMSA, PEA, SPSO, AFSCME, Bus Drivers, CCEA, Custodians, Tri-Council, Bricklayers, Carpenters, Cement Masons, Electricians, Glaziers, Painters, Pipe fitters, Plasterers, Plumbers, Roofers, Sheet Metal Workers, and Tri-Council Temps., as is provided for by Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.03. It was passed by acclaim.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

The Board of Education and Administration then discussed strategy for labor negotiations, including negotiation strategies, developments, discussion, and review of labor negotiation proposals for all bargaining units, including ASAP, Educational Assistants, Machinists, Nutrition Services Personnel, Principals, School and Community Service Professionals, Teachers, MMSA, PEA, SPSO, AFSCME, Bus Drivers, CCEA, Custodians, Tri-Council, Bricklayers, Carpenters, Cement Masons, Electricians, Glaziers, Painters, Pipe fitters, Plasterers, Plumbers, Roofers, Sheet Metal Workers, and Tri-Council Temps., as is provided for by Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.03.

VII. MOTION TO OPEN MEETING

MOTION: It was moved by Director Vue, and seconded by Director Ward, to open the meeting. It was passed by acclaim.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Director Vue, and seconded by Director Foster, to adjourn the meeting. It was passed by acclaim.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

For clarity and to facilitate research, these minutes reflect the order of the original Agenda and not necessarily the time during the meeting the items were discussed.

Prepared and submitted by:

Sarah Dahlke

Board Secretary, St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education