



Unified School District 232

De Soto – Shawnee – Lenexa – Olathe
www.usd232.org

USD 232 BOARD OF EDUCATION

OFFICIAL MINUTES -- REGULAR MEETING

Administrative Office (35200 West 91st Street, De Soto, KS)

August 2, 2021

YouTube channel: <https://bitly.com/usd232youtube>

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by the Board President, Danielle Heikes. A quorum of the Board was present. Attendance was as follows:

Board Members Present: Rick Amos
Bill Fletcher
John Gaignat
Danielle Heikes
Stephanie Makalous
Ashley Spaulding
Rachele Zade

Others Present: Alvie Cater, Assistant Superintendent of Administration & Communications
Steve Deghand, Assistant Superintendent of Facilities & Operations
Wendy Denham, Board Clerk/Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
Carrie Handy, Executive Director of Elementary Education
Tara Harmon-Moore, Coordinator of Health Services
Dr. Frank Harwood, Superintendent of Schools
Rob Moser, Coordinator of Safety & Transportation
Brandon Riffel, Director of Technology
Sam Ruff, Principal, De Soto High School
Brian Schwanz, Executive Director of Secondary Education
Julie Stucky, Director of Finance

Alvie Cater led attendees in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. He then briefly explained how the meeting will progress from one agenda item to the next.

GOOD NEWS.

Mill Valley High School Relay for Life. Cory Wurtz, teacher at Mill Valley and sponsor of the Jaguar Nation Relay for Life, was joined by students Anna Brazil and Alyssa Canning who served as Executive Team Leaders in 2020-21 and will be Chairpersons of the event this school year, to share information on the school's Relay for Life event. This is a fundraising event for the American Cancer Society, specifically pediatric cancer, and consists of student teams of 4-12 who get sponsors and walk laps around the track.

The event includes ceremonies, a survivor dinner and lap, on-site fundraising, a silent auction and activities. Mr. Wurtz said Mill Valley has had 40-60 teams with 300-475 participants as well as countless other spectators and community support. He shared a history of funds collected and said that since 2016 Mill Valley has raised \$446,940.00. Accolades for the school's Relay for Life event include the following: 2016 National Student Number One Rookie Event, 2019 National Student Top Five Per Capita Income, 2019 Flynn Spirit of Relay Regional Winner and 2021 National Youth Top Performing Event Runner Up. Mr. Wurtz shared a breakdown of student leadership for the event and their responsibilities and concluded his presentation with dates for 2021-22 events.

PATRON INPUT. President Heikes opened the floor for patron input. The following individuals spoke:

April Davies, Shawnee, requested that the Board require masks for students and staff in the district at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. She said masking is an effective mitigation technique to prevent the spread of COVID.

Regan Becker, Shawnee, a student in the district, said that she had a medical mask exemption, but experienced a negative environment at school without the mask. She asked the Board to keep the masks as an option.

Laura Berg, Shawnee, asked the Board to reconsider their decision to make masks optional for the upcoming school year and re-instate a mask requirement. She referenced a recent COVID outbreak in a summer school camp at Clear Creek Elementary.

Susan Mohn, Shawnee, thanked the Board for their service and expressed sorrow with the division COVID has created in the district. She asked the Board to consider a mask policy for children under the age of 12 who are not authorized to receive the vaccine.

Abby Reichle, Lenexa, said that she is the expert in taking care of her kids. She said her kids do have a medical mask exemption and has concerns about the bullying. She supports anyone choosing to wear a mask and asked that the Board give the choice to students.

Debbie Detmer, Shawnee, spoke about PCR tests producing false results and said the tests are being recalled. She said the CDC has suppressed the only mitigation factor which is natural immunity. She said with vaccination there isn't protection from new strains of the virus. She said it is not the unvaccinated creating this environment, it is the vaccinated. She asked the Board to not push the masks.

Becky Gallagher, De Soto, said that there has never been anything more divisive than what is going on now. She said she is here to protect those that wish to wear masks and also those that do not wish to wear a mask. She strongly opposes mandatory masks for students. She also spoke about limiting exclusion.

Arlice Gallagher, De Soto, said she is for parental choice along with family physicians.

Monica Lewis, Shawnee, said she and her children have auto-immune disease. She said if the Board makes masking optional then children are being taught to ignore recommendations from qualified professionals. She supported a mask policy for all students. She asked the Board to follow the science and the data regardless of political influence.

Lara Kennedy, Shawnee, said almost 6 years ago she held one of her babies while they died and said she would hate for anyone here to ignore the science and risk losing a child.

Amy Knapitsch, Lenexa, said she is a pediatrician and mother of USD 232 students. She spoke about an uptick in COVID cases and hospitalizations and encouraged the Board to require students over the age of 2 to wear masks. She said with high transmission and optional masks there will be numerous quarantines. She said masking is key to successful in-person learning.

Jake Rasdall, Shawnee, asked the Board to enforce a mask requirement for the upcoming school year. He said all students deserve in-person learning. He said his daughter, who has auto-immune disease, has seen multiple doctors who have all said mask use is necessary.

Jacquelyn Matthews, Shawnee, said the CDC has never said it would be safe for an unvaccinated person to be indoors without a mask. She said the Board has left families scrambling for other options. She said masks must always be worn to be effective and masking during COVID is a matter of public safety. She said until all students are eligible for the vaccine, all students should be in masks.

Melanie Thompson, Shawnee, asked that the Board re-instate masks for students, particularly students under 12 who are not eligible for the vaccine. She reminded the Board that not all information is reliable. She said the Board must look to experts in the medical field. She said many parents want the choice to have their children vaccinated before returning to an un-masked environment. She asked the Board to be preventative instead of reactive.

Sarah Carmichael, Shawnee, said Sanmi Areola and Elizabeth Holzschuh are not medical experts. She said the vaccine is not approved for emergency use in the United States. She said the Johnson County Department of Health & Environment needs to answer questions and asked why the goalposts keep moving. She asked the Board to not mandate healthy children to wear masks all day.

Marlina Yates, Shawnee, said her daughter was one of the children who attended the JCPRD summer camp that was closed due to a COVID outbreak. She said this is an example of how easily and quickly COVID can spread without a mask requirement. She said if masks aren't required then many people will send their children to school without a mask and schools will have to be closed. She asked the Board to implement a mask mandate for the school year.

Gina Gauna, Shawnee, said if masks are not required her unvaccinated children will not be able to attend school in the Fall due to her health comprised father living in their home who is on oxygen. She asked the Board to vote to adopt an indoor mask mandate for all students and staff. She said the science fully supports masking to prevent the spread of this deadly virus.

Emily Carpenter, Lenexa, said that she loved that the Board starts every meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. She said any policy put forth by the Board and Superintendent must not violate state law. She said no-one loves children more than their own parents and no-one knows them more than their own parents. She asked that the Board allow parents, along with their pediatricians, to decide what is in the best interest of their students. She said giving everyone the freedom to choose is what living in America is all about.

Lindsay Flint, Shawnee, said there were multiple mitigation efforts in place last year so to say masks were responsible for limiting exposure is false. She said quarantine should look no different if masks are parent choice. She said a survey regarding mask use was taken down that listed over 400 parents supporting parent choice. She asked the Board allow parents to work with their pediatricians.

Kelley Emmons, Shawnee, strongly asked the Board to follow the recommendations of the CDC. He asked the Board to listen to the relevant subject experts and choose a universal mask mandate.

Alison Phillips, Shawnee, asked the Board to think about more than what is happening with COVID. She advocated for parental choice and a normal school year for kids.

John Moyer, Shawnee, said one of the school's he drove by on the way here had a sign that says "Thankful for our Freedom". He asked the Board to allow parents to choose how to manage their own risk. He cited difficulty his kids had with mask use and said if the Board chooses to enforce a mask mandate they will not be attending school in the district this year. He said the latest COVID survival rate for children is 99.99%.

Amber Sims, Shawnee, said the vote the Board made on July 12th was premature and a lot has changed since then. She asked the Board to vote for a mask mandate for students in grades K – 5 who do not have the opportunity to get vaccinated. She encouraged the Board to listen to medical professionals.

Dustin Harris, Shawnee, said he is an observation expert. He said the PCR test and antigen test, are on recall. He said Phizer just said there will be a need for anti-viral medication to treat COVID. He said Fox 4 said Children's Mercy is full and drives fear, but Children's Mercy said they have plenty of capacity.

President Heikes declared a five-minute break at 7:25 p.m.

The Board returned to open session at 7:30 p.m.

President Heikes asked if there were any changes to the Agenda or Consent Agenda. No changes were requested.

Mrs. Stephanie Makalous moved to adopt the Agenda and approve the Consent Agenda.

Mrs. Ashley Spaulding seconded.

Carried 7/0.

The following Consent Agenda items were approved:

1. Minutes of the July 12th regular meeting.
2. Payment of bills and issuance of checks numbered 55718 – 55806 and 55811 – 55886.
3. Personnel recommendations as follows:
 - Resignations – Classified
 - Brooke Brownwell, Paraprofessional, SE
 - Deborah Corbitt, Cashier, PRE
 - Elia Diaz, Evening Custodian, MVHS (*effective 7/23/21*)
 - Kristie Deutsch-Nelson, Paraprofessional, MCMS

Dava Holden, Center Based Paraprofessional, BE
Nicole Jones, Paraprofessional, MTMS
Susann Krenzel, Student Nutrition Substitute, Districtwide
Melissa Nelly-Cramer, Secretary, DHS

Retirement – Classified

Deb Johnson, Facilities Department Administrative Assistant, DSC

Employment – Classified

Janelle Baldwin, Center Based Paraprofessional, BE
Sally Brackney, Center Based Paraprofessional, DHS
Mitchell Brandenburg, Center Based Paraprofessional, BE
Noelle Drabek, Nurse, CTEC
Maria Fiscella, Substitute Early Childhood Paraprofessional, CTEC
Jennifer Hansen, Paraprofessional, The Bridge
Jennifer Kohles, Paraprofessional, ME
Lacey Morely, Paraprofessional, The Bridge
Candy Sitcler, Student Nutrition Assistant, MVHS
Caesar Villa, Long-term Paraprofessional Substitute for Connections B Classroom, LTMS
Coelleen Walter, Paraprofessional, RE
Leslie Wilson, Secretary, MVHS
Chris Young, Custodian, CCE
Gerald Young, Custodian, MVHS

Resignation – Certified (At the conclusion of the 2020-21 school year.)

Jennifer Carter, 3rd Grade Teacher, RE
Jerry Howard, Graphic Design Teacher, MVHS

Employment – Certified (Effective for the 2021-22 school year.)

Molly Brandenburg, Speech Language Pathologist, BE
Heather Grayson, 3rd Grade Teacher, PRE
Mary King, 7th Grade Pathways Teacher, MTMS
Travis Kohler, Graphic Design Teacher, MVHS

4. Acceptance of an investigation report.
5. Revisions to Board Policy DC – Annual Operating Budget and adoption of new Board Policy DE – Fraud Prevention and Investigation.
6. Acceptance of the following donations:
 - Snap Circuits, K’Nex and Magnatiles (valued at \$462.64) from DonorsChoose.org and T-Mobile to Maddie King’s 4th grade classroom at Starside Elementary School.
 - \$500.00 from the USD 232 Education Foundation to the USD 232 Early Childhood Department.

ACTION ITEMS.

Budget & Revenue Neutral Rate Notice of Hearings Publication. Julie Stucky, Director of Finance, referred the Board to the Form 150 and Code 99 budget documents included in the board packet. For Form 150 she pointed out that the General Fund is still based on student enrollment counts and the district can use

counts from last year or the previous year. She said the September 2019 student counts will be used this year. She said the Base State Aid Per Pupil (BSAPP) will be \$4,706.00 then reviewed the various sources of revenue that make up the General Fund legal maximum budget authority. On Code 99 she pointed out that the biggest change is that federal funds are increasing due to ESSER Funding. This form shows a comparison of actual expenditures for 2019-20 and 2020-21 compared to proposed budget expenditures for 2021-22. Mrs. Stucky explained that a higher budget is proposed than what the district is expected to spend to avoid having to republish the budget at a later date if something happens that would cause the need to spend more than what is originally published. She said Capital Outlay is budgeted well above what the district is expected to spend, but publishing a higher amount would give the district authority to cover unexpected emergency expenses.

Mrs. Stucky then reviewed a new publication for exceeding the revenue neutral rate. She said that Senate Bill 13 requires that the board adopt a resolution for the revenue neutral rate. She said Column 1 shows the actual amount of tax levied in 2020-21, Column 2 indicates the actual tax rate for 2020-21, Column 3 calculates what the tax rate would have to be in order to raise the same amount of taxes for 2021-22. Mrs. Stucky said that since the district's assessed valuation has increased, the district has no choice but to exceed the revenue neutral rate since it is required to have a 20 mil General Fund. The Supplemental General Fund and Capital Outlay Fund are both previously public voted on tax levies.

Bill Fletcher asked if the mill levy was lowering. Mrs. Stucky said it was going down by .401 mills. Mr. Fletcher asked how much the assessed valuation increased. Dr. Harwood said it increased by about 7-8%.

Mrs. Ashley Spaulding moved to approve publication of the Notice of Hearing - 2021-2022 Budget in the district's official newspaper stating that the Board will hold a public hearing on the budget on September 13, 2021, 6:00 p.m., at the USD 232 Administrative Office, 35200 West 91st Street, De Soto, KS.

Mr. John Gaignat seconded.

Carried 7/0.

Mr. Rick Amos moved to approve publication of the Notice of Hearing - Exceeding the Revenue Neutral Tax Rate for the 2021-2022 School Year in the district's official newspaper stating that the Board will hold a public hearing on exceeding the revenue neutral tax rate on September 13, 2021, 6:00 p.m., at the USD 232 Administrative Office, 35200 West 91st Street, De Soto, KS.

Mrs. Danielle Heikes seconded.

Carried 7/0.

Approval of 2021-22 Audit Firm. Julie Stucky explained that at the last meeting the Board approved Karlin & Long, LLC to do the district's audit this year; however, the next day they announced that they were no longer going to be doing school district audits. She said Karlin & Long has recommended Varney & Associates to do the audit and said they will honor the price quoted by Karlin & Long (not to exceed \$12,000.00). She said if the board approves Varney & Associates the administration will do an RFP for a firm next year.

Mrs. Rachele Zade moved to approve Varney and Associates to conduct the 2021 USD 232 fiscal audit.

Mrs. Danielle Heikes seconded.

Carried 7/0.

Professional Negotiated Agreement, 2021-22. Alvie Cater, Assistant Superintendent of Administration & Communications, shared with the Board that the Negotiations team has reached a tentative agreement with the De Soto Teacher's Association (DTA) in regards to the Professional Negotiated Agreement (PNA) for the 2021-22 school year. He talked about the strong partnership between USD 232 and the DTA. He then highlighted key components of the district compensation schedule noting that it adds \$500 on the base, allows for horizontal and vertical movement on the salary schedule, and adds approximately 2.51% to the salary schedule, or \$782,070.00. Mr. Cater asked for Board approval of the PNA, but noted it will not be in effect until the association has had a chance to ratify the agreement.

Mrs. Danielle Heikes moved to approve the 2021-2022 Professional Negotiated Agreement between USD 232 and the De Soto Teacher's Association as presented.

Mrs. Rachele Zade seconded.

Carried 7/0.

Compensation Packages for Employees not covered by the PNA. Carrie Handy, Executive Director of Elementary Education, presented compensation recommendations for employee groups not covered by the PNA. She said classified staff (hourly and salaried) will see an increase in the base salary by an average of 3.65% for each employee within established salary ranges for each employee group and 1.0% for employees outside of the established range. This will result in an increase salary cost of \$341,840.00. Part of the increase in classified salaries is due to a revised nurses' salary schedule and some other increased starting salaries. Mrs. Handy said for administration there will be an increase to base pay equal to an average of 2.5% within established salary ranges for each employee group and 1.0% for employees outside of the established range. This will result in an increase salary cost of \$109,484.00. She asked for Board approval of the proposed compensation packages.

Mrs. Ashley Spaulding moved to approve staff compensation packages for the 2021-2022 school year as presented.

Mr. Rick Amos seconded.

Carried 7/0.

Retention Incentive MOU with De Soto Teachers Association. Brian Schwanz, Executive Director of Secondary Education, reminded the Board that local school districts could use Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) grant funds to improve retention rates. He presented a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between USD 232 and the DTA regarding a one-time retention incentive for professional employees. He noted that administration also intends to provide the retention incentive to other employee groups not covered by the PNA. Each full-time staff member who was employed before December 31, 2020, and has been continuously employed through October 14, 2021, will receive a one-time \$600.00 retention incentive and staff members employed after December 31, 2020, but by August 12, 2021, and have been continuously employed through October 14, 2021, will receive a \$300.00 retention/hiring incentive. Those staff members employed less than full-time will receive a pro-rated

payment. He said if the Board accepts the MOU the administration will take necessary steps with the State to gain approval to use ESSER funds for this purpose.

Mr. Rick Amos moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between USD 232 and the De Soto Teachers' Association for a one-time retention incentive for professional employees.

Mrs. Stephanie Makalous seconded.

Carried 7/0.

Communicable Disease Mitigation Protocols. Superintendent Harwood reviewed the communicable disease mitigation protocol document that the Board approved on July 12th. He said several public health and medical groups provided updated recommendations following the CDC update on July 9th. The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment, Children's Mercy, the American Academy of Pediatrics and a group of 100 Kansas City Metro area physicians all provided updated guidance. Superintendent Harwood said that although there were slight variations, the recommendations were similar and summarized by KC Metro area physicians: 1. Prioritize in-person learning, 2. Mandatory Universal Masking for all grades in which students are not yet eligible for vaccination (preschool – 6th grade), 3. Strongly encourage masking in unvaccinated students in grades where students are eligible for vaccination (grades 7-12); and, 4. Strong Contact Tracing including following health department guidance for isolation and quarantine. He said that on July 27th the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released updated guidance recommending universal masking for everyone regardless of vaccine status when indoors. He then shared current considerations for masks, remote learning, exclusions and voluntary testing (symptomatic/screening/after exposure/symptomatic Influenza).

With regards to masks, Superintendent Harwood said there is a current order from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and US Dept of Health that requires the use of masks on school buses. He said the latest advice from the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) is that federal regulation requiring masks for mass transit does apply to school buses. He said an additional concern that has been discussed surrounds students who are medically fragile. An important layer of protection would be to have staff members working in close proximity to students with certain medical needs wear a barrier face mask regardless of vaccination status.

With regard to remote learning, Superintendent Harwood said that the Board of Education can only authorize forty hours of remote learning in a school year. The Kansas State Board of Education can authorize up to 240 hours in some circumstances.

Bill Fletcher asked the administration to have the district's attorney review the vaccination policy.

Superintendent Harwood said that with regard to exclusions the conversation this evening is about who is considered a close contact for exclusion. He introduced Elizabeth Holzschuh, Epidemiologist with the Johnson County Department of Health to speak. Ms. Holzschuh said that in most cases, the health department is not recommending contact tracing or quarantines when there is universal masking. She added, if two or more people have tested positive for COVID in a classroom the health department will contact trace to see if the infection happened in the classroom. She said that assigned seating is helpful in identifying close contacts. She said the health department wants to make the most targeted exclusions

possible. She said they want to look at who was in close contact with the diagnosed individual while unmasked. Ms. Holzschuh said there are two strategies to return to the classroom: 1. If the individual who is a close contact gets tested on day 6 and it's negative that person can return on day 8; or, 2. If the individual who is a close contact chooses not to get tested and remains symptom free on day 10 that person can return on day 11. She said the CDC has developed a new test that actually tests for COVID-19 and Influenza, a combined test. She said unmasked individuals that are vaccinated or have had COVID-19 within the last six months would not be excluded. She said the vaccines are very effective at preventing hospitalization and death. The recommendation from the CDC is that vaccinated people who are exposed should mask and get tested on day three or five. Ms. Holzschuh said the number of COVID cases for children is rising, and there are more severe cases resulting in hospitalization. She pointed out that kids were put into a bubble last year because they were in masks. She said she believes that without a mask policy we will see a lot of COVID spread and risk of severe outcomes. She said transmission outside is less than indoors and an outdoors exposure would not be considered close contact, but may be examined on a case by case basis.

Danielle Heikes asked about the health department's role in contact tracing. Mrs. Holzschuh said the school nurses would be interviewing school staff and identifying close contacts on school grounds and in activities. The health department can mandate quarantine requirements. Superintendent Harwood said the school cannot quarantine anybody. He explained that the district was using the health department's recommendation for quarantine. He said that somebody who is isolated is either positive or presumed positive, while someone quarantined is suspected to be exposed. Mrs. Holzschuh said the health department's goal is to keep kids in school. She said with transmission the department is seeing locally the district will have cases within a week without masks and the best way to keep kids in the schools consistently is through masking. She said the department has seen a 577% increase in positive cases over the last month. She said the recommendation to mask students is not an all-year thing. She said the department expects cases to peak and then to drop quickly, possibly as soon as October. She said with masking and vaccination herd immunity can be reached sooner.

In response to a question from Rachele Zade about proof of mask use efficiency, Mrs. Holzschuh referred her to the Journal of American Medical Association for reports on studies of mask use.

Ashley Spaulding asked what the health department's threshold is for being comfortable with removal of masks. Ms. Holzschuh said the department will continue to watch reports from the CDC. She also spoke about quick contact tracing to avoid exposure.

Danielle Heikes said there is at least one local district that is implementing very little mitigation efforts this year. Ms. Holzschuh said that Senate Bill 40 kind of muddied the waters as far as who has responsibility for implementing mask measures.

Ashley Spaulding asked how the district would respond if a doctor would not provide a medical exemption. Dr. Harwood said that the district would need information from a qualified medical professional to grant a medical exemption.

Ms. Holzschuh spoke about steps the health department is taking to look at the mental health issue relating to COVID.

Superintendent Harwood talked about voluntary testing (symptomatic testing/voluntary screening/testing after exposure/symptomatic influenza). He said funding for testing comes through a CDC grant.

Superintendent Harwood reviewed the recommended changes to the Communicable Disease Mitigation Protocols:

- Masks – Barrier face mask requirements on school buses should match classroom mask requirements unless there are mask regulations governing school buses that are more restrictive.
- Exclusions – Individuals who are considered contagious or are presumed to be contagious with a communicable disease will be excluded from school.

Individuals who are exposed to COVID-19 and are recommended for quarantine by JCDHE will be excluded from school. Individuals who are fully vaccinated or have a documented case of COVID-19 in the last six (6) months are not considered exposed and will not be excluded from school unless they are symptomatic.

- Testing – The district will partner with MAWD and KDHE to provide voluntary COVID-19 testing for symptomatic individuals, screening of non-symptomatic individuals, and for individuals who are exposed to COVID -19.

Superintendent Harwood said that the Administrative Guidelines presented would be loose guidelines that the district would use in a case-by-case instance and were not a part of the protocols.

Rick Amos asked if there was a reason why masking wasn't included in the guidelines. Superintendent Harwood said it could be there, but last year the Board specifically had the mask mandate issued through policy.

Rachele Zade noted that if the Board would have followed all of the health communities guidelines our students would not have been back in school as soon as they were. She asked if the district would be liable if the Board doesn't follow the CDC's guidelines and there is a hospitalization or death from COVID. Superintendent Harwood explained that the further the Board deviates from what would be considered reasonable guidelines, the greater the chances of liability.

Danielle Heikes said in-person learning is her primary objective. She said her second objective is the health and safety of students and staff. She asked if the Health Department can shut schools down if they reach a certain percentage of spread. Dr. Harwood said that the Board will make a decision on handling of quarantines. He added that if spread of any communicable disease is high enough the county health officer has the authority to close a district facility.

Rick Amos said this will not be a normal school year. He asked if a school has a major COVID outbreak and has to shut down for two weeks how time is made up. Superintendent Harwood said the district would start with remote learning and then ask the State Board of Education, based on the health department shutting it down, to grant additional remote time. He said if they didn't grant that request the district could decide whether to extend the school year.

Stephanie Makalous said that parents would rather their kids wear masks to stay in school and avoid remote learning.

John Gagnat said the masks seemed to have worked for the district in getting kids back in the schools.

Ashley Spaulding said the Board also needs to take into consideration the mental health aspect of kids having to go remote. She said there are also a lot of children that have anxiety about going to school where kids aren't vaccinated and un-masked.

Danielle Heikes said she is struggling with how to keep students in school given situations that have popped up in the past several weeks. She said she wants to allow parents to make their own decisions, but she keeps coming back to the exclusion issue and potential in closing school buildings. She said there is no clear cut definitive information to say you need to mask, but it is known that by masking the district was able to keep kids in schools last year. She said if the district has to shut buildings down and go to remote learning it could be reverting back to last year. She said she didn't want to be the district who turns into the example of why to not make masks optional.

Rachele Zade said she couldn't find reports on why masks work with COVID and said she wasn't ready to make a decision.

Ashley Spaulding said the guidance that is being presented to the Board is not conflicting. She said that experts are with the organizations putting out the guidance saying that masking is the best way of prevention.

Bill Fletcher said it should be the parent's choice about whether or not to put their children in masks. He said masks won't stop the spread and the district will still have outbreaks.

Rick Amos asked why students with medical exemption for masks had to be separated from students with masks. Superintendent Harwood said if the person with a medical exemption and no mask gets a positive COVID diagnosis it causes an issue for other people in the room. He said the chances of that one person being infected is lower. Mr. Amos said his number one goal is to have in-person learning. He pointed out there is proof in our district that mask use works.

Superintendent Harwood said that if there is a Health Department order and the school district decided not to follow the order there is a much higher liability. He said he would never advise the Board to not follow an order. He said that is a different matter than not following a recommendation.

Stephanie Makalous said she agreed with Mr. Amos. She said that the Board's job is to make sure that we have a safe environment for students and staff.

Stephanie Makalous moved to approved the Communicable Disease Mitigation Protocols as discussed.

Mrs. Makalous rescinded her motion.

Superintendent Harwood said if the Board is considering masking they need to take into consideration whether it will be for all grade levels.

Rachele Zade asked what happens if the Board passes a mask mandate and a parent sends a student to school without a mask. Superintendent Harwood said they would be sent home and able to return with a mask or a mask exemption.

Rick Amos said with students 12 and under not eligible to receive the vaccine he would have an issue with enforcing a mask policy for 6th graders when 7th and 8th graders would not have one. He said he could support teachers that are vaccinated deciding whether or not to wear a mask.

Stephanie Makalous said the masking policy needed to be per building or grade and not based on who is vaccinated.

Danielle Heikes said the district could be in a position of shutting down schools with masks being optional. She said in-person learning is her primary concern.

Rachele Zade suggested the Board could allow grades 7 -12 to be optional and enforce masks for kids in grades under 7.

Rick Amos asked Dr. Harwood what his thoughts are on requiring masks for 6th graders. Superintendent Harwood said with the exception of extra-curricular opportunities 6th graders rarely interact with 7th and 8th graders. He said logistically it would be possible to require 6th graders to wear masks. He added that there may be limited times a 7th grader could be exposed to a masked 6th grader.

Ashley Spaulding said the low vaccination rate for secondary students has to come into play when considering masking.

Superintendent Harwood said the district received a report broken down by zip code for kids ages 12-17 which showed the vaccination rate three weeks ago ranging between 22 and 40%.

Superintendent Harwood said if the Board does require masks at any level they need to allow medical exemptions and exemptions for those that are deaf or hard of hearing.

Superintendent Harwood said that with masking in the classroom and a positive test there would not be exclusion unless there were multiple cases in the classroom and it was found to have originated there.

Danielle Heikes asked the Board to look at the recommended changes to the mitigation protocols and tweak individual pieces of it.

Stephanie Makalous said she would like the Board to consider masks for all students and staff Pre-K – 12, in all district buildings.

Danielle Heikes said she would like to take staff who don't interact with students off the table. Said her focus is student learning and keeping classrooms open.

Bill Fletcher said he didn't know how grade levels could be separated when you have secondary students living in the same home as elementary students.

Superintendent Harwood said the discussion he is hearing is that all students Preschool – 12th grade and staff who interact with students be in masks.

Superintendent Harwood said if the Board decides any group of students will need to be in masks the administration will work with schools to minimize interaction during lunch periods and activities.

Danielle Heikes asked what the largest group of exclusion was. Dr. Harwood said there were 75 students excluded in morning weights.

Stephanie Makalous moved to adopt masking for Preschool – 12th grade and teachers and staff only when they have close contact with students, all indoors, and follow the same previously approved exemptions that were in place last school year.

John Gagnat seconded.

Rick Amos suggested an amendment to adopt masking for Preschool – 5th grade. Mrs. Makalous did not accept the amendment.

Danielle Heikes suggested an amendment to adopt masking for Preschool – 6th grade. Mrs. Makalous did not accept the amendment.

Carried 4/3. (Danielle Heikes, Rachele Zade and Bill Fletcher dissented.)

Superintendent Harwood said with masks Preschool – 12th grade there should be very few exclusions. He said if two students in the same class are positive the Health Department will look to see if there are situations other than the classroom where they may have been exposed. He said the requirement for masks will greatly reduce the chance for quarantine, but does not eliminate it. He said his recommendation is to adopt the protocols for exclusions and testing as they are written.

Mrs. Stephanie Makalous moved to approve that visitors follow the same barrier mask requirements as staff.

Mrs. Makalous withdrew her motion.

Mr. Rick Amos moved that facemask requirements for visitors should match classroom requirements unless there are government mandates that differ.

Mrs. Stephanie Makalous seconded.

Carried 6/1. (Rachele Zade abstained.)

Mrs. Danielle Heikes moved to approve the Communicable Disease Mitigation Protocols as discussed this evening.

Mrs. Ashley Spaulding seconded.

Carried 7/0.

ALERTS. The following reports were included in the packet for this board meeting with notice that they will require future action by the Board of Education: 1. Unified Bowling; and, 2. Instrumental Music RFP Request.

President Heikes adjourned the meeting at 10:49 p.m.

September 13, 2021
Date Approved

Wendy S. Denham
Clerk, Board of Education

Janice Heikes
President, Board of Education