



# *Seneca Valley School District*

## **SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL MEETING**

Seneca Valley Intermediate High School Auditorium – 3:45 p.m.

## **SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**February 17, 2021**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Mr. Eric DiTullio, President, called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m.
  - A. **Moments of Silence** – The meeting was opened with a moment of silence in memory of the lives lost due to COVID-19, and in reflection of those who are mourning loved ones, recovering from the illness or have been negatively impacted during this time.
  - B. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Mr. DiTullio led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
  - C. **Roll Call** – Roll call by Lisa Mislán, Board Secretary, showed the following members in attendance: Ms. Leslie Bredl, Mr. Eric DiTullio, Ms. Susan Harrison, Mr. Timothy Hester, Mr. Mike Jacobs, Mr. James Nickel, Mr. Frederick Peterson Jr., Ms. Kathy Whittle. Mr. Jeffrey Widdowson was absent.

Others present included Dr. Tracy Vitale, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Matthew McKinley, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary; Dr. Sean McCarty, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary; Ms. Kyra Bobak, Human Resources Director; Ms. Linda Andreassi, Director of Communications; Dr. Marie Palano, Supervisor of Analytics and Federal Programs; Dr. Jeffrey Roberts, Supervisor of Gifted Education and Student Services; Mr. Matthew Hoffman, Solicitor

2. **INFORMATION REPORTS** – Covid-19 Update and Data – Dr. Vitale provided an update as follows:

On February 16, 2021, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) moved Butler county, along with 14 other counties, to the “moderate” transmission level. There are 51 counties remaining in the substantial range for transmission.

This week, Dr. Vitale participated in calls with PDE, Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) and all the school superintendents in Butler county. PDE provided ideas on how to address learning gaps in light of the pandemic. In our March board meetings, we will discuss how Seneca Valley will utilize the federal money being pushed out to school districts. Seneca Valley will receive a portion of the \$2.2 billion federal funds and we will have until September 2023 to utilize these funds. Pennsylvania is receiving 175,000 doses of the vaccine per week; however, there are currently over \$3.5 million in the 1a category to be vaccinated.

On Friday, February 12, 2021, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) provided new return-to-school guidance. We have been advised to make local decisions based on our county data regarding how to bring the children back to school for more in-person instruction.

In addition, the 51<sup>st</sup> meeting (since the pandemic began) with Butler County Commissioners, Butler Emergency Management, Butler Hospital (infectious disease expert, Dr. Love) and all seven Butler County school superintendents was held this week. Everyone is reporting cautiously optimistic views.

We are all very focused on vaccine distribution and are beginning to plan for when the “1b” category opens to all teachers/educators in Pennsylvania. We anticipate that Butler County will stay in the moderate transmission rate this week and that we will continue to drive down the numbers. If we meet the less than 10% PCR rate and the less than 100 incidence rate thresholds, we will be in “moderate” for our second week in a row.

While this is all great news, we must remain vigilant. It is not time for us to let up on our protections and mitigations at school. It is not yet time for us to let our guard down in crowds or social gatherings. As a county, we must continue to drive down the transmission.

### Data Points:

- **PCR Positivity Rate** (most recent seven days February 5-11) is now at 6.4%, down from 7.4%.— This is one of several thresholds to move us to “moderate” as a county. We need to be at 10% or lower. We have met this threshold for three weeks in a row now.
- **Incidence Rate** (most recent seven days February 5-11, per 100,000 residents) is now 86.8, down from the previous week at 117.1. We have met this threshold of 100 or less to move our county to “moderate” transmission. Therefore, we expect that when the PADOH officials update their list today at noon, Butler will show as “moderate.”
- **Difference in Confirmed Cases** (most recent seven days vs. previous seven days) show that we are down 69 more cases in the county. Last week, we were down 43 cases.
- **Butler County Daily COVID Rate** is monitored daily from the dashboard of the PADOH website: [Pennsylvania Data \(pa.gov\)](https://www.padoh.org/Pages/COVID-19-Dashboard.aspx)

As of today, the 14-day rolling average is 42.9 which is the lowest since November 5, 2020. Unfortunately, this is not how the state tracks COVID cases for their transmission level thresholds. Therefore, refer to the second bullet above on “incidence rate”.

**Zip Code COVID Cases** within the Seneca Valley School District are also monitored daily. Only 24 new cases were reported on Monday, February 15 for the entire weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) across all seven of our school district zip codes. On Tuesday, February 16, only six cases were reported and only ten cases were reported today. There are approximately 50,000 people that live in our school district.

**SV COVID Dashboard** [COVID-19 / SV COVID-19 Dashboard \(svsd.net\)](https://www.svsd.net/COVID-19-Dashboard) We have eight active student cases, 53 students in quarantine and no active staff cases as of today.

**New CDC Guidance for schools just released this past Friday, February 12**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html> “To enable schools to open safely and remain open, it is important to adopt and consistently implement actions to slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2 both in schools and in the community. This means that all community members, students, families, teachers, and school staff should take actions to protect themselves and others where they live, work, learn, and play. In short, success in preventing the introduction and subsequent transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in schools is connected to and facilitated by preventing transmission in the broader community. There is evidence to suggest that K-12 in-person school attendance is not a primary driver of COVID community transmission. For schools to operate in-person learning safely, the

association between levels of community transmission and risk of transmission in school must also be considered. Communities that fully implement and strictly adhere to multiple mitigation strategies, especially universal and proper masking, will reduce COVID-19 incidence within the community as well as within schools to protect students, teachers, and staff members.”

- **CDC Indicators and Thresholds for Community Transmission of COVID-19**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>

Table 1. CDC Indicators and Thresholds for Community Transmission of COVID-19

Indicator	Low Transmission Blue	Moderate Transmission Yellow	Substantial Transmission Orange	High Transmission Red
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days <sup>2</sup>	0-9	10-49	50-99	≥100
Percentage of NAATs that are positive during the past 7 days <sup>3</sup>	<5.0%	5.0%-7.9%	8.0%-9.9%	≥10.0%

**Instruction Model** - The CDC recommends full in-person instruction K-12 when in “moderate” with physical distancing of six feet or more to the “greatest extent possible.” If we go to moderate again this Friday, we will no longer be bound by the attestation form which requires six feet social distancing.

**Six feet social distancing** - Not every classroom will be able to have six feet of distance between students. We will do our very best but once we are in moderate for the second week the attestation form no longer applies, and the six feet rule is not required but we fall under the “when feasible” language.

**What about the variants?**

Dr. Vitale recently heard an interview by an epidemiologist who said that she gets asked often by the media, “What about the variants? Aren’t you concerned?” She said, “Of course. However, we now know how to better combat and deal with COVID-19. Therefore, we use the same mitigations and safety protocols we already know to combat these variants: universal masking, washing hands and the six feet rule.” Parents need to understand that we may have to move back to the Cohort model quickly if these variants take off.

**Vulnerable staff members**

- Those 65 and over were given the opportunity to move to our cyber program.
- Those with underlying health issues were provided the opportunity to take a full year, unpaid leave (keeping medical benefits), or move to the cyber program.

**Vaccinated Staff** – We now have 70 staff members who have been vaccinated. We are working closely with our County Commissioners and County Emergency Management Director so that when “1b” opens to our teachers and school employees they can receive the vaccine.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – There was no public comment.

#### 4. INSTRUCTION ACTION

**Secondary Instructional Model Change** – Beginning Monday, February 22, 2021, secondary students (grades 7-12) will return to in-person instruction four days a week (Monday-Thursday) and Fridays will be a remote instruction day. These Fridays will be used for additional cleaning, to conduct case investigations/contact tracing and to assist in breaking up the potential of COVID transmission. Live streaming will continue to be an option for all students. In order to prepare for this instructional model change, secondary teachers in grades 7-12 will be given a half day In-Service day on Friday, February 19, 2021 to prepare for the transition. Therefore, students in grades 7-12 will receive asynchronous assignments in their afternoon classes.

Mr. Peterson thanked Dr. Vitale for the months of information and noted that we are not yet “home free.” There is concern about the unknown aspects of the variants as some may be more transmissible, but less pathogenic, with fewer people hospitalized or dying from them. He added that Seneca Valley has gone beyond the CDC’s five exposure elements of protection from the virus.

Mr. DiTullio added that all previous mitigation efforts, such as plexiglass, will remain and that parents still have the choice for remote or Cohort model instruction.

Mr. Peterson motioned, seconded by Mr. Nickel to approve the secondary instructional model change as noted above. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative and Mr. Widdowson absent.

5. **ADJOURNMENT** – With nothing further to come before the Board, Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Ms. Whittle, to adjourn the meeting at 4:16 p.m. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative and Mr. Widdowson absent.

Mr. Eric DiTullio, President



Ms. Lisa Mislan, Board Secretary