



Seneca Valley School District

SCHOOL BOARD ACTION MEETING

Seneca Valley Intermediate High School Auditorium - 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

December 7, 2020

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Mr. Eric DiTullio, President, called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.
 - A. **Moment of Silence** – The meeting was opened with a moment of silence.
 - B. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Isla Perry, a third-grade student at Connoquenessing Valley Elementary School, continued the board meeting initiative, *I Led the Pledge*, by reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance.”
 - C. **Roll Call** – Roll call by Ms. 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, and Mr. Jeffrey Widdowson.

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. Lynn Burtner, Business Manager; Ms. Heather Lewis, Athletic Director; Ms. Linda Andreassi, Communications Director; Dr. Marie Palano Director of Analytics and Federal Programs; Dr. Jeffrey Roberts, Supervisor of Gifted Education and Student Services; Ms. DeeAnn Graham; Ms. Donna Shaefer, and a press representative.

2. INFORMATION REPORTS

- A. **Student/Staff Recognition** – Ms. Linda Andreassi announced the following:
 1. The Seneca Valley Boys’ Soccer Team, under the direction of Head Coach George Williams and Assistant Coaches Jay Roman and Scott Stewart, made school history on Saturday, Nov. 21, when they won the PIAA Boys’ 4A State Championship.

Dr. Vitale, Coach Williams, Ms. Lewis, Ms Whittle, Mr. Jacobs, and Mr. DiTullio all congratulated and thanked the team, their families, and the coaches for their commitment and dedication. In addition, the teams’ character and the sacrifices they all made, despite the pandemic, is most impressive.
 2. The Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh recently announced that Jim Lucot Jr. has been named the 2020-2021 Holocaust Educator of the Year. The award began five years ago in the interest of recognizing and encouraging excellence in

Holocaust education in the tri-state area. Mr. Lucot has been a leader among Holocaust educators for decades. He never stops learning; recently completing a Master's degree in Holocaust Studies for which he traveled the country visiting Holocaust memorials.

- B. **Dates to Remember** – Ms. Andreassi announced the following dates to remember:

December 12	SHS ACT Testing, 7:30 a.m. – 38 students
December 23 – January 1	Winter Break: No School for Students or Staff
January 11	School Board Work Session, I H S Auditorium 7 p.m.

- C. **Agency Reports**

1. Vo-Tech – Mr. Peterson reported that Vo-Tech business is being conducted online through the end of the year. As of today, they plan to return, in person, on January 11, 2021. The Christmas cookie sale was canceled. The next meeting is Dec 17. Mr. Nickel added that the Authority Board will also meet on Dec 17. Mr. Jacobs will step up as one of the two lead liaisons.
2. I.U. IV – Mr. DiTullio reported that their next meeting will be held on Dec 16. Bids and presentations are being received for a new HVAC system to be completed in 2021.

- D. **Legislative** – Mr. Peterson reported that there is little to report at the federal level regarding education. Most of the activity in Washington now deals with the fallout from the November election, seeking bicameral agreement on a COVID relief bill and passing a budget bill which will obviate the need for a government shutdown on Dec 11.

At the state level, the General Assembly closed the 2019 – 2020 Session on November 30. With the end of the General Session, all legislative activity ceases and any bills being considered die and must be reintroduced when the new Session convenes on January 5, 2021.

Before Harrisburg began its holiday break, the Governor signed a bill adding \$11 billion to the Commonwealth's operating budget bringing the total annual budget to \$35.5 billion and avoiding the need for a continuing resolution or a government shutdown. Prior to the legislative close, the House and Senate achieved concurrence on House Bill 1737 which would have provided limited liability for school districts from COVID-19 related legal claims. Governor Wolf vetoed this bill but included in the budget package a measure to protect hospitals, businesses, and schools from COVID-19 related lawsuits.

- E. **Cranberry Township Residential Developments**

Dr. Vitale reported that the Laurel Pointe development on Franklin Road has received final approval. This will allot for 168 single family units with expected construction to begin this winter, 2020. The residential plan has added another phase

which increases the total lots by 11. The benefits for our region are additional tax revenue and potentially more children in our district.

F. **COVID-19 Update** – Dr. Vitale provided an update as follows:

The Seneca Valley Dashboard will not be updated during remote instruction, but the board and the public will be provided an update during board meetings.

To our knowledge, there are seven more student cases and eight additional staff cases since the dashboard was last updated.

The Butler County community transmission rate is in its fifth week of substantial designation. The county's incidence rate is 300.7 and PCR is 12.8%.

For Seneca Valley to go back to in-person instruction, following the most recent guidelines, we need to be in the moderate range, have less than 100 new cases in a seven-day period, a less than 10% PCR rate, as well as hit other benchmarks.

During the week of Thanksgiving, the district was required to sign an attestation form which ensures implementation of mitigation efforts for public school entities. Included are new, more stringent thresholds for closing buildings once we return to in-person instruction.

Any Pennsylvania public school that refuses to sign the attestation form may not provide any in-person instruction, only full remote, and must suspend all extracurricular activities while the county is in the substantial range of community transmission. By signing, we have flexibility when we go back to moderate.

As we look at the zip codes within the Seneca Valley school district, when we opened schools in August, we were seeing four or five new cases, on average, per day. As of today, we are seeing 100 new cases per day, on average. In the Seneca Valley zip codes, the latest 14-day average is 118.4 new cases per day.

Local medical advisors have told us that just because we are not seeing significant numbers in our elementary schools does not mean elementary students are not getting the virus. We are seeing a fourfold increase from October to November and we have not yet seen the Thanksgiving numbers.

The attestation form, in the substantial mode, also requires us to socially distance even at lunch or during a mask break, when unmasked, which we can only do in the cohort learning model.

As of Dec. 5, 85 people have died due to COVID-19 in Butler County. Of those deaths, 34% have occurred in the last two weeks.

Staffing is getting critically low due to quarantines from potential exposure. This includes teachers, cafeteria employees, paraprofessionals, custodians, and administrators. We have 23 super subs that can step in for teachers. Staffing will be of concern as we move into January, even in cohort.

The CDC has offered, as an option, to lower the quarantine days from 14 to 10, or seven with a negative test. Pennsylvania told us this was optional. We need time to discuss and make decisions for our district.

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

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Approved the following meeting minutes:

- A. **Work Session** – November 2, 2020
- B. **Action Meeting** – November 9, 2020

5. **TREASURER'S REPORT** – Approved the treasurer's report.

Mr. DiTullio motioned, seconded by Mr. Widdowson, to approve the minutes and treasurer's report. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

6. **ADMINISTRATION ACTION**

- A. **Board Policies** – Approved the following board policies
 - 1. Policy 902 – Publications Program, revised, second and final reading
 - 2. Policy 903 – Public Participation in Board Meetings, revised, second and final reading
 - 3. Policy 907 – School Visitors, revised, second and final reading
- B. **The Children's Institute Services Agreement** – Approved The Children's Institute Services Agreement for educational and related services through July 13, 2021.
- C. **Revised Phased School Reopening Health and Safety Plan** – Approved the revised phased reopening health and safety plan.

Dr. Palano provided an update of the terminology from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) now being used to categorize our school guidance. PDE and PADOH will no longer rely solely on the designations of green, yellow, and red. The recommendations are now categorized as low, moderate, and substantial relying on incidence rate and percent positivity of diagnostic testing.

In addition, the Health and Safety Plan now reflects the new face covering order and associated guidance. All individuals must wear a face covering unless they have a documented medical or mental disability. As an alternative to a face covering, a face shield may be considered. The face shield must cover the nose and mouth leaving no exposed gaps. This is only an option where wearing a cloth face covering is not feasible, or where there is an exception.

Additionally, when we are in the substantial mode of operations, face coverings can be removed only when eating or drinking and spaced six feet apart; when wearing a face covering creates unsafe conditions; and when there is at least six feet of separation during a face covering break that lasts no longer than ten minutes.

Mr. DiTullio motioned, seconded by Mr. Hester, to approve the board policies, The Children's Institute services agreement and the revised phased school reopening health and safety plan. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

7. **INSTRUCTION ACTION – Return to School Instruction Model** – Approved the return to school instruction model, as provided by the superintendent, for the month of January 2021.

Dr. Vitale provided the board with a tentative plan for return to school after the holiday break noting that there are many factors that must take place for this to happen. The following plan, provided via a letter to all parents/guardians and staff, is **tentative** based on COVID-19 cases, data, staffing availabilities and updated requirements from the PADOH and PDE. We will continue to assess and monitor this information throughout this month and will provide any updates should we need to adapt or revise this plan.

Grades K-6

- All students will work remotely on Jan. 4 and Jan. 15.
- Students in Cohort B (last names M-Z) will physically attend school on Jan. 5, 7, 12 and 14.
- Students in Cohort A (last names A-L) will attend on Jan. 6, 8, 11 and 13.
- There is **no school on Jan. 18** as this is a semester break; teachers are in session for clerical.
- Learning models for the remaining dates in January are to be determined.

Grades 7-12

- All students will work remotely Jan. 4-12 and 15.
- Students in Cohort A (last names A-L) will physically attend on Jan. 13, 20, 22 and 25.
- Students in Cohort B (last names M-Z) will physically attend on Jan. 14, 19, 21 and 26.
- There is no school on Jan. 18 – this is a semester break; teachers are in session for clerical.
- Learning models for the remaining dates in January are to be determined.

***Why tentative?**

In order to move to a five-day, in-person model, Butler County must be in the “moderate” transmission level for two consecutive weeks (we are currently in the “substantial” level of transmission). Additionally, as per guidance from PADOH, students must be 6 feet apart to remove face coverings when eating, which is not something we can achieve in the five-day, in-person model. In part, it reads: “Schools may allow students to remove face coverings when students are:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart, or
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task, or
- At least 6 feet apart during “face-covering breaks” to last no longer than 10 minutes.”

This is a requirement when in “substantial” and operating under the conditions of [PDE’s Attestation Form](#). To learn more about the updated school guidance regarding face coverings and masks, visit [Public Health Guidance for School Communities \(pa.gov\)](#).

Reporting Cases:

- The Seneca Valley COVID-19 Dashboard is on hiatus while Seneca Valley, grades K-12, is in the remote learning model. The dashboard, developed as a public informational tool, is intended to provide real-time data on active cases and quarantines to assist the District in tracking building cases for potential closures/remote learning. It was also a means for parents when making decisions on whether to send their student to school. During this time of fully remote instruction, it appears that not all parents are reporting students’ COVID-19 cases to the schools, and the data does not appear to be as reliable. Once we return to in-person instruction, the dashboard will be reactivated.
- As we plan for reopening, we encourage parents to report COVID cases - even during remote learning ([contact information for SV Building Nurses](#)). This is valuable data for us to determine if/how COVID may or may not be impacting students and staff.

Quantitative Data:

The following data is considered when making learning model decisions:

- **SV COVID Cases** – To date, there have been 24 staff cases, 58 total student cases. Please see “Reporting Cases” section above.
- **Community Transmission Rate** - Butler County is now entering its fifth week of a “substantial” level of transmission. The Butler County incidence rate is 300.7 (this is per 100,000 residents over the most recent seven-day period) and our PCR (positive tests over the most recent seven-day period) rate is 12.8%: COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring System Dashboard (pa.gov). To get back to “moderate,” the county needs an incidence rate of less than 100 new cases per 100,000 residents in a seven-day period and the PCR positivity rate must be lower than 10%, among several other benchmarks.
- **Butler County Cases on a 14-day rolling average** - When we opened school, we were seeing four or five new cases on average per day. Today we are seeing 100 new cases on average per day. Our latest 14-day rolling average for Butler County was 127 new cases per day.
- **New Thresholds for Closing** - This is per individual school building: [Responding to COVID-19 Case\(s\) at School \(pa.gov\)](#). Please note that our K-6 schools are “medium” size and all of our 7-12 schools are considered “large” based on current enrollment and PDE classifications. This chart is very important for parents to pay attention. These new numbers are what will drive our temporary closures.
- **Social Distancing** - Social distancing has been updated when students are unmasked, and a county is in “substantial.” Please see “Why Tentative?” section above.
- **Deaths** – To date, 95 people in the county have died from COVID. However, in the last two weeks, 34% of those deaths have occurred and since Nov. 1, nearly 60% of the deaths of the total in our county have occurred. In addition, we are still waiting on Thanksgiving holiday data.
- **Staffing** - Our staffing is critically low due to quarantines and is being closely monitored.
- **Quarantine** - The length of quarantine was lowered by the CDC to 10 days and seven days after a negative test. However, the PADOH has not provided clear advice if we can follow this new guidance as schools. We hope to get this guidance in the next few days.

Additional Considerations:

- While many of the medical and public health experts agree school is one of the safest places for kids to be, we must also consider their remarks within the context they make them. We have consulted with local medical experts and they have shared, until our community spread numbers come down, they are advising us against in-person instruction.
- Contact information for services and information to support children and families: **Mental Health Crisis Services - 800-292-3866 or text to 63288. For general mental health concerns, mental health services, or any additional human services needs, call Center for Community Resources (CCR) at 844-360-4372.**
- The following outlines the vital importance of following testing and quarantine requirements when traveling: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Travelers.aspx>.

As we shared at the onset of the pandemic, we want to provide as much in-person learning as possible in alignment with public health guidance. We know we must also keep the health and wellness of our communities as our collective priority. For those reasons, we are taking the above measured steps in consideration of our students, families, staff, and ultimately, our communities.

Mr. Nickel commented on the number of school board email communications and noted that we are hearing all concerns. Mr. Nickel supports Dr. Vitale’s plan and noted that we will do our best to get students back to school safely.

Mr. DiTullio echoed Dr. Vitale's comments noting that we must improve the community spread in order to get the children back to our schools.

Mr. DiTullio motioned, seconded by Mr. Jacobs, to approve the return to school instruction model. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

8. **PERSONNEL** – Personnel items were discussed in an executive session held prior to this meeting.
- A. Appointments – *Professional* – Erin Elmer; *Classified* – Renee Abbs; *Supplementals* – Josh Sullivan, Tim Thoma, Dave Miller, Joe Laukaitis, Karen Fornadel
 - B. Leaves – *Supervisor* – Russ Sarver; *Psychologist* – Kathleen Mahon, Jaclyn Macioce; *Professional* – Lauren O'Donnell, Dean Leventopoulos, Amanda Lesney, Shay Houser, Kristin Robinson, Danielle Fagan, Christina Hollowood, Valerie Danner, Amy Book; *Classified* – Shelby Grosclaude, Sheli Baker, Lisa Martin, Caitlin Whitney, Shannon Morris, Lisa Recce, Mary Rasmussen, Irma Martinez, Elizabeth Marthens, Beth Lauer, Valerie Kirk, Jaime Lippert, Nichol Mignanelli, Kristen Verlihay, Kristine Hart, Allisyn Pascarella, Madeline Nowak, Beth Brethauer, Nicole Pint, Judy Schall, Michelle Tresky, Sarah Wolfson, Paula Nicklas, Lynette Plank, P. Lauren Sunday, Nellie Luna, Irene Young, Robin Sedlak, Emerald Willis, Alesia Oechslein, Mary Ann Stephenson, Jennifer Curtis, Jacquelyn McElheny, Steven Trempus
 - C. Merit – Any eligible administrator covered by the Act 93 agreement, administrator who is a rider on the Act 93 agreement, a director/supervisor, or confidential secretary” will receive a one-time merit payment of 2% of their July 1, 2020 base salary to be paid in the form of a separate check on December 24, 2020. This merit will be categorized as a bonus and is not to be added to the employee's salary base. To be eligible, an employee must currently be classified as active status and not be designated as having any performance-based issues with their supervisor(s).
 - D. Retirement – *Director* – Gerald Miller

Mr. Widdowson motioned, seconded by Mr. Hester, to approve the appointments, leaves, merit, and retirement as listed above. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

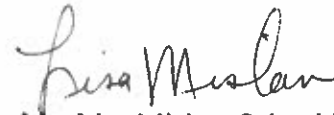
9. **COMMUNICATION** – Communication was received from the following:

- A. Preference and support for Cohort or full-remote instruction K-12
 - 1. Ms. Jennifer Wolfe
 - 2. Ms. Heather Bianco
 - 3. Ms. Rachel Petelin
 - 4. Dr. Peter Sylves
 - 5. Ms. Sierra Albert
 - 6. Ms. Denise Halyama
 - 7. Mr. Geoff Zimmerman
 - 8. Ms. Danielle (Gorley) Slacker

- B. Preference and support for cohort or five days in-person instruction 5 | 3 4
1. Ms. Jeanne Bestwick
 2. Mr. Michael Leedecke
 3. Ms. Stacy Leedecke
 4. Mr. Ben Waldrum
 5. Ms. Lindsey Waldrum
 6. Mr. Rich Allen
 7. Ms. Ami Halin
 8. Ms. Kelsey Zadrozny
 9. Ms. Shannon Tharnish
 10. Ms. Amy Gilbert
 11. Mr. and Mrs. Bob Congdon
 12. Ms. Danielle Iaquina
 13. T. McHenry
 14. Ms. Deena McHenry
 15. Ms. Brandee Rentz
 16. Mr. Mark Bidoli
 17. Ms. Megan Rippin
 18. Ms. Amy Perschke
 19. Mr. Nathan McCollough
 20. Mr. and Mrs. Ty Bintrim
 21. Mr. Mark Gartner
 22. Ms. Melissa (no last name provided)
 23. Ms. Candace Kantz
 24. Ms. Jessica McKenzie
 25. Mr. Steve Elliott
 26. Mr. Brandon McKenzie
 27. Mr. Tom Bailey
 28. Ms. Erika Costanzo
 29. Mr. and Mrs. Dave Silvester
 30. Mr. Justin Page
 31. Ms. Nicole Nehnevajsa
- C. Support for decision to move 7-12 only to Cohort – Ms. Christine Wilson
- D. Concern or questions about guidelines for recent school building closures
1. Ms. Leah Bedell
 2. Ms. Cathy Cox
 3. Ms. Nicole Sylves
 4. Mr. Walter Regal
 5. Ms. Fran Kreider
- E. Request for number of asymptomatic positive cases – Ms. Stephanie Lane
- F. Invitation to National School Boards Association focus group – Ms. Kristen Hutter
- G. Positive feedback and note of thanks
1. Ms. Kaylyn Talton
 2. Ms. Beth Lauer
 3. Ms. Tammy Blazer

- H. Relaxed rules for sports – Mr. Chris Bogdon
 - I. Cohort suggestion – Mr. Joseph Wagner
 - J. Dangers of long-term mask wearing – Ms. Stephanie Lane
 - K. Note of thanks – Ms. Beth Kane
 - L. PSERS election – Mr. Steve Esack
 - M. Concerns about mask wearing at school – Ms. Stephanie Lane
 - N. Various expressions of concern and appreciation for teachers
 - 1. Mr. Travis Pile
 - 2. Ms. Jaclyn Gaus
 - 3. Ms. Kristen Burcham
 - 4. Ms. Nicole Sylves
 - 5. Mr. and Mrs. Tony Livorse
 - O. Lack of testing in Butler County
 - 1. Mr. Kyle Ford
 - 2. Ms. Kim Geyer
10. **MISCELLANEOUS** – Mr. DiTullio stated that committee assignments will be shared for approval in January. The Pennsylvania Public School Employee Retirement System (PSERS) election ballots will be mailed on December 10, 2020. Ballots will need to be received by December 31, 2020. Mr. DiTullio asked for support in this endeavor.
11. **ADJOURNMENT** – With nothing further to come before the Board, Mr. Widdowson motioned, seconded by Ms. Hester, to adjourn the meeting at 6:20 p.m. The motion carried on a voice vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

Mr. Eric DiTullio, School Board President



Ms. Lisa Mislán, School Board Secretary