

OWOSSO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Board of Education Minutes
August 10, 2020
Report 20-12

As the host of the District's virtual school Board Meeting, Superintendent Dr. Tuttle provided the participants with a few guidelines and procedures.

President Mowen called a Special meeting of the Board of Education to order at 5:34 pm. Due to Governor Whitmer's current Executive Order 2020-75, the meeting was held virtually using Zoom video conferencing from the Washington Campus, 645 Alger Street, Owosso, MI 48867.

Present: Keyes, Krauss, Mowen, Ochodnicky, Quick, Webster
Absent: Paez

Board Correspondence

Superintendent Dr. Andrea Tuttle shared because this is a special meeting and it will be a lengthy meeting with the COVID Preparedness and Response plan, she is foregoing the Superintendent's and Curriculum Director's report for this meeting.

Public Participation

President Mowen stated that the Board of Education is a public body and recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues. Time has been included in the meeting's agenda for public participation. Members of the audience were reminded that they should announce their name and group affiliation when applicable and to limit their participation time to three minutes or less. Comments should be directed to the Board and be relevant to the business of the Board of Education. This is not an opportunity for dialogue with the Board of Education. The rules of common courtesy should also be observed.

Public comment was heard by the following:

Jim Hathaway
Cheryl Voss
Justin McGraw
Eric Locker
Julie Whitebird
Tom Manke
Valerie James
Dean Paxton
Ann Gamboe Hall
Susan Montenegro
Sophie Montenegro
Justin Darnell
Melissa Bodbyle
Jamie Newman
Karen Mead-Elford
Janae Fear

For Action

Dr. Tuttle responded regarding COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan inclusive of the Return to Learn Plan.

Dr. Tuttle shared the following. I've been an educator long enough to know that once I start the Return to Learn presentation, people are going to stop listening to me and just read the slides. So

please indulge me as I take 10 minutes to preface my Return to Learn presentation by sharing the following. Much of the information I am going to share will be reiterated in my Return to Learn plan recommendation.

One of my greatest challenges for me throughout this whole process is who to communicate with first, second, third and so forth. Although the teachers' leadership team and our administrative team have worked feverishly to create a plan, I have not been able to share the proposed plan with the entire educational team prior to this evening's recommendation to the Board. So everyone is aware, I have invited the entire educational team to join this meeting as this will be the first time collectively they will hear the plan in its entirety. Therefore, although this is a public meeting of the Board, there are many in the public who are listening including educators and parents and I appreciate their presence and thank them for joining.

Please know that the decision on how to safely reopen school has been the hardest professional decision I have had to make in my 25-year career. I'm used to making tough decisions, but none have been tougher than this. I'm worried. I'm worried about our kids, our families, our community and beyond. I have received and carefully listened to input from parents, members of our educational team, community members, health care workers, experts at the health department, lawyers, state and federal government requirements and recommendations, as well as many Board members, etc. Beliefs and opinions are strong and many times contradictory, but through it all, the OEA and administrative team have been working on the Return to Learn plan that provides options for everyone. Attending school is very important to the development and well-being of most if not all of our children. It gives them proper education, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech and mental health therapy, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits. Our goals are to ensure that the benefits of in-person education far outweighs any risks.

For the 2020-2021 school year, Owosso is not slated to begin school until Sept. 8 while other schools are beginning almost 2 weeks before us (as you know this is a result of our bond construction which is progressing beautifully and will provide incredible modern day facilities and amenities for all students). As a result of this later opening, we have the unique opportunity to learn from the positive things other districts are doing and reflect and adjust processes/procedures where there is room for improvement. Just because we have always done it one way, does not necessarily ensure that it is the right way or the best way. We are choosing to focus all our energy on what could be rather than what was. We are choosing to seek positives in every situation.

The parent survey (which garnered a tremendous response and I wish to sincerely thank all who participated) indicated that 72% of respondents desired an option for in-person instruction while 28% desired an option for on-line instruction. This is reflective of the fact that parents ultimately know what the best option is for their student and their family circumstances. In honoring the desire for choice, the plan that will be presented offers both options. Both options take into account the need for academic rigor, accountability, clear expectations and relationship building. In addition, the in-person option follows the strict cleaning guidelines as outlined in the State's Return to Learn plan to offer a safe learning environment.

When I present the plan, you will note that the school day for all in-person students, except preschool at Bentley Bright Beginnings, has been shortened but has students coming to school every day instead of only certain days of the week. We know, as educators, everyday contact is important for relationship building, consistency and routines. In addition, we are also planning to provide extended learning options at the elementary level for parents whose work schedules are not conducive to the shortened school day schedule. Bentley Preschool and childcare will

maintain their regular hours and schedule as in previous years and have learning opportunities for those who choose the at home option.

The shortened school day is a result of our desire to 1.) Ensure that students will have the same teacher when they transition from online to in-person learning or vice-versa which may occur multiple times this year depending on what phase we are in; and 2.) Provide teachers with ample time to prepare meaningful and engaging lessons for ALL students on their class lists whether they are online or in-person. In this way, we can ensure that teachers are able to build meaningful relationships and provide engaging opportunities for all their students.

Families who select the on-line learning option for their children can be assured that their children will receive engaging and rigorous lessons provided by their child's highly qualified teacher or teachers who will remain constant whether receiving in-person or on-line instruction. Lessons will be provided throughout the day for these students and there will be a dedicated time daily when students are able to communicate whether by Zoom, email, etc. directly with their teacher.

If the plan is supported and approved by the majority of the Board, the next step is to send parents a form tomorrow, August 11, requesting them to commit to one of the learning platforms available for each of their children by no later than Tuesday, August 18. We understand this is a very short turnaround time for such an important decision which is why a comprehensive explanation document as well as a Q and A document has been developed to assist families in making a choice that works best for each of their children. That form will also be available tomorrow. Choices can be unique for each child in the family. However, if a parent chooses the online platform for their child, the child must maintain that platform option until at least Sept. 30 and possibly through the first marking period. The reason online students will not be permitted (unless under unique and individualized circumstances) to resume in-person learning during this time is because we will be working diligently to reduce in-person class sizes to the smallest number possible to provide for as much social distancing as possible.

The decision on how to return to learn was an input decision and much input was heard and considered. I want to sincerely thank everyone for sharing their thoughts. From start to finish, there have been 8-10 proposals on the table. This has been a journey of a thousand miles, but ultimately tonight I am bringing one complete plan to you for recommended approval.

As you know, there are a multitude of reasons why Owosso is the schools of choice in Shiawassee county, but the two I hear most often are as follows:

- 1.) Owosso boasts a tremendous educational team who works to build positive relationships and are knowledgeable in their content areas, and:
- 2.) Owosso is known as the district of opportunity in Shiawassee County because we offer roughly 40% more opportunities than any other school district in the county. People love our school district because students can participate in classes beyond the core classes, such as Biomedical Science, Engineering, Culinary Arts, Entrepreneurship, AgriScience, Construction Trades, Choir, Band, Visual Arts, International Baccalaureate, and many more not offered by other districts. Our elementary students have the opportunity to participate in 5 different encore classes each week which provides far greater opportunities for our elementary students than those provided in other districts. For those reasons, the plan I will present maintains all of those opportunities for students regardless of the option a parent chooses.

This plan is contingent on the county being in Phase IV as Phase III will change things drastically and Phase V will include minor alterations. This is why careful consideration has been given to the format of both options presented in order to provide for easier transitions between platforms when necessary. I wish to be very candid at this point--the plan is going to present choices for both in-person and on-line options; however, I think I would be remiss if I did not share that I think every parent should be prepared for an on-line only option if the county moves back into a phase III or for some other reason.

I know I have shared a lot in my narrative and I thank you for listening. Much of what I just shared will be reiterated in the plan as it stands today in Phase IV. Please note that this is one comprehensive plan titled the COVID 19 Preparedness Plan which is inclusive of the Return to Learn Plan. I am going to present the plan quickly as it takes about 25 minutes to get through, but if the Board approves this plan, it along with a Q and A document and Health Department information will be provided for parents in an effort to make an educated choice that works for each of their children and their family. So, with no further ado, here is the plan that I recommend to you the Board of Education for approval. I am going to begin with the return to learn plan and slideshow.

Dr. Tuttle went through Owosso's Return to Learn Plan in detail via a Google Slides presentation. Plan provides choices for in-person and online.

The Return to Learn plan was shared first. Now I will open it up for board discussion. Any board member comments?

Webster: 1. Will playground equipment be cleaned between recesses? The answer is yes. 2. If a student in a classroom tests positive, what are the implications? We've been in contact with Shiawassee. Health Dept. Larry Johnson who also is a parent and wonderful human being. If a student has COVID in elementary classroom, quarantine whole classroom and go to online for 14 days. There's a whole process for COVID-19. We would consult with health department; parents would be notified.

Webster: Do we have numbers from the health department on how many under the age of 18 have tested positive for COVID? Dr. Tuttle says yes.

Quick: I have stats downloaded today. 17 cases between ages of 0-19.

I noted that you made mention of classroom sizes. Will they be reduced? Dr. Tuttle: Yes, by virtue of students taking online option. We think they will be reduced by 30% based on current survey results. Will we have additional support for bus drivers? Once survey numbers are in the Transportation Supervisor will review and determine best options. It was stated additional support for bus drivers is a valid question and has not been discussed.

Classroom and building sanitation stations what are they? Sanitizer in each classroom. Teachers can spray desks and kids can wipe their space. At each entrance, there are hands-free sanitizing stations. Same for buses.

What is our sanitizer supply at this time? Probably a month. The free standing stations are coming from Cintas and they have a 3-month supply of sanitization solution. 50 of these stations for the schools and 1 for every bus.

Was there mention that the children will clean their desk? Yes. Teachers will have a EPA regulated squirt bottle. Teacher would spray desk, child would wipe desk, throw away paper towel and then wash hands.

Ochodnicky: Do we have a way to make sure that elementary kids don't have access to sanitizer? Concerned about ingestion of sanitizer. The stations will be right at the teacher's desk and monitored by teachers.

Krauss: Explain the training that teachers will receive? Dr. Tuttle: Safe Schools training with more added pertaining to COVID. Additionally, checklists will start to be created for custodial staff and those cleaning buildings.

Ochodnicki: How are we doing band and choir? Dr. Tuttle: Those questions are still a little bit influx. Principal Phillips is working with band directors. Take as many students outside as possible. Band teachers delivering other instruction outside of playing an instrument. Keep kids safe. Go outside. Adjust for online learners. Mr. Tolrud, Mr. Sterk, Mrs. Kowalczyk working on this.

Quick: With regards to choir, there may be specialized masks for choir? Do we have funds to purchase? Dr. Tuttle: First I've heard of this. I'd be interested in looking into this. CARES funds may be used for this. Ochodnicki suggested the OPS Foundation for funding these masks.

Mowen: Question relayed from a teacher at elementary level, if they are required to meet online with students, face to face and dismiss at 1:10 how would they meet with the next cohorts in that afternoon option? Dr. Tuttle: intend to meet with teachers on Zoom call and provide further guidance. A different set of teachers would work with the extended learning students.

Ochodnicki: Thank you to everybody for all of the hard work. Teachers. Administration team. Create a great plan that works for everybody. We will do everything to make the best of the plan. I appreciate the plan.

Dr. Tuttle: Mr. Brooks reminded me that people can go back to online whenever they want.

Quick: Is it possible that a teacher could have all online? Dr. Tuttle: Yes, theoretically. However, class lists have not been solidified at the elementary level. The plan is a teacher has equal numbers of students. Possibly at secondary level for one hour. Won't know until all of the questionnaires come back.

Dr. Tuttle shared the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan and reviewed the highlighted parts where there have been changes made. Dr. Tuttle shared her screen and reviewed the changes.

This is a two-part plan. Plans go hand in hand and must be approved together. Floor opened for questions.

Quick: There is no outline or areas for spacing, moving and access? Are we not making provisions for that? Dr. Tuttle: Yes, we are. Space decals on floors, students stand 6ft apart. At secondary level ask students to stay on the right and walk single file, remain 6ft apart with masks. Elementary level: only time leaving classroom is to go to recess and restroom. Ask teachers to help maintain social distancing.

Quick: Move to all online if move to phase 3. Is there a scenario that we could move to all online? Dr. Tuttle: Yes, to be blunt, we talked about this with other Superintendents. Other districts have said that they would close if there is one case. Example from health department: **Bob sits next to Fred in class. Fred gets sick with COVID-19. Bob needs to be quarantined, even though he is healthy at this time. Bob plays on the football team, and Fred does not. No one on the football team has been near Fred. Therefore, the football team does not need to be quarantined. Hopefully, Bob will not get sick and will be back to school and football in a couple of weeks.**

It's going to happen. Health Department will be contacted. Dr. Tuttle defined primary and secondary exposures. Type of exposure would determine if we move to all online.

Quick: Have we developed a policy where if we get have 1 case, are we done? If we hit 5 cases, are we done? Does test have to be confirmed as positive before class is quarantined? Dr. Tuttle: Referred to health department document and explained.

Webster: Believes the document states a positive test or clinical diagnosis from a doctor would count. Dr. Tuttle: I can't speak definitively to that question. My first call will be to the health department director Mr. Johnson and confirm we are handling the situation properly.

Quick: Do teachers have options? Are there teacher options for those who are pregnant, immune suppressed or compromised? Dr. Tuttle: They would need a medical reason as per EO 166.

Larry Johnson: I appreciate all you are doing. Good job with the plan. Shared info on isolation, quarantined and how that plays out. Has to be a confirmed case before quarantine. Quick asked about all online. Yes, it is a possibility but we would work closely with the school to determine steps.

Dr. Tuttle: Executive Order 166 will be shared with OEA. Have a list of questions from teachers.

Quick: Regarding lunch not eating in cafeteria? What do we do with larger classes like band? Dr. Tuttle: Eating lunch outside if possible or splitting classes. Will be determined once we have numbers. We are fortunate that with the expansion we have additional rooms. Eat with a staff member does not necessarily mean their 4th hour teacher. May not be the whole group of band students.

Ochodnicky: What if a teacher gets sick? Dr. Tuttle: Same protocol as a student. Have a COVID confirmed case, their classes would have to quarantine. Mr. Johnson confirmed. Dr. Tuttle shared option of flip the classroom and video tape themselves. Student can watch lessons at home or on Chromebook with earbuds at school. Do homework outside of school. Teacher's would continue recording lessons if possible.

Quick: If they are quarantined, do teachers have to use sick time during the quarantine? Dr. Tuttle: Refer to EO 166.

- Moved by Ochodnicky, supported by Krauss to approve the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan inclusive of the Return to Learn Plan as presented.
Make a motion to accept by Ochodnicky. After discussion support by Krauss. Secretary roll call
Keyes: Yes
Krauss: Yes
Quick: Nay
Ochodnicky: Yes
Webster: Yes
Mowen: Yes
Motion carries.

For Future Action

- Obsolete material: Page 19 of board packet. Some of this has been in the district for decades. Valuable furniture has been stored.

Public Participation

Public comment was heard by the following:

Tom Manke
Eric Locker
Julie Whitebird
Ian Garland
Jamie Newman
Valerie James
Melissa Bodbyle
Racheal Bailey
Rashelle Ocenasek
Dean Paxton
Steve Starr
Jim Hathaway
Valerie James

Margaret Starr

Board Member Comments/Updates

Ochodnicky: Shared a CDC article and encourages everyone to read the article and feels it supports why we should have school. Discussed the science, and testing. Likes the phases that the governor came out with but feels it should be done by county. Represents students and parents that want to be in school and need to be in school. We have a high rate of sexual abuse. I work for the children and parents in this community. Expressed support of school opening.

Keyes: Everything that we decide on this board affects my children and family. These decisions are difficult and I do not take them lightly. 8-10 proposals have put off and not any of them will fit everyone. All want students to be healthy. It's difficult right now. We are doing the best we can. It keeps me up at night. I apologize to anyone who thinks we are not making the right decision. I appreciate Dr. Tuttle and Mr. Brooks for creating a plan. It might not be popular you're doing best you can and I appreciate that.

Krauss: I want to extend my thanks to all of those in the public who participated tonight. It's important that you get an opportunity to share and express. One of the most important things we have is civil discourse. Sharing of ideas. Thank you for sharing. I do appreciate you, and respect you.

Webster: Someone said that the beginning that all of us care. It's really important that to remember that people on the other side care very much. We all care. All doing to the best we can. As leaders we had to make a decision. We wish this could be easier. I know teachers are nervous but I think our board has an awesome history of supporting our teachers. We have to support families and students. Families are going to lose jobs. Is school childcare? We will monitor the situation, making changes, trying to move forward. Saying all of that about the people who have decide we need to move forward and listen to each other. Looking at a different perspective. Give grace to each other. We have a great board. Great cohesiveness. We are very important to families that we serve.

Quick: Requested to review this plan at every meeting prior to school starting. Shared concerns of a situation regarding a preparedness plan she prepared. Expressed its her responsibility to ask questions and encouraged board members to do the same.

Mowen: I'd like to echo some of the comments. I truly appreciate some of the community involvement. We as a board can govern best if we hear from you. Board members, I have the utmost respect for each and every one of you. We have one common goal: do what's best for this district. Do people always make the right choice? Maybe, maybe not. We make the choices based on the information available. I appreciate each member.

Upcoming Board Meeting Dates.

August 24, 2020: Regular Board Meeting, 5:30 pm held via Zoom per EO unless that changes.

Adjournment

Moved by Quick, supported by Ochodnicky to adjourn at 8:20 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes recorded by Jessica Thompson

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Webster
Marlene Webster, Secretary