

**NOVEMBER 30, 2020
WILMETTE, IL
SPECIAL MEETING**

A Special Meeting of the Board of Education was held remotely (virtual) on Monday, November 30, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with President Lisa Schneider-Fabes presiding.

Members Present: Lisa Schneider-Fabes, Jon Cesaretti, Frank Panzica, Amy Poehling, Mark Steen, Ellen Sternweiler, Erin Stone

Members Absent: None

Administrators Present: Kari Cremascoli, Corey Bultemeier, Tony DeMonte, Heather Glowacki, Katie Lee, Kristin Swanson

METRICS TEAM DISCUSSION UPDATE

Dr. Cremascoli stated the Metrics Team met for their weekly review of the metrics that guide schools remaining open. External and internal metrics are observed to ensure health and safety of program operations as well as to monitor and advise regarding adjustments to programming. A review of both external and internal metrics reveals a combination of impactful factors, including substantial rates of COVID-19 throughout the community, increasing quarantine restrictions, and ongoing concerns regarding the ability to safely staff and operate schools, which has been done successfully over the last 10 weeks. The current external metrics lead administration to anticipate increased, unavoidable challenges to internal staffing and operations.

Dr. Cremascoli stated schools have proven to be quite safe, however they cannot be effective if they cannot be staffed in predictable and consistent ways. The metrics team's recommendation to take an adaptive pause to in-person instruction for the two weeks of December was based on a myriad of factors that collide to make in-person instruction incredibly challenging and potentially ineffective to the rigorous learning and growth achievement desired. External review of COVID transmission rates and new cases per 100K continue to fall in substantial red zone of risk. Cases increase the substantial risk of spread within the community. Upon review of operational metrics, the team spent substantial time discussing the challenges associated with the growing number of quarantines, limited substitute staff availability, and operational challenges with staffing for in person instruction. The substantial rates of COVID-19 throughout the community and increasing quarantine restrictions lead the District to anticipate ongoing concerns regarding the ability to staff and operate schools required to provide effective in-person instruction. The Metrics Team recommended an adaptive pause to in-person instruction for the weeks of December 7th and December 14th. Prioritization of in-person instruction for the neediest and youngest students is recommended, including students in special education comprehensive needs programs and students in Early Childhood through 2nd grade classrooms. Factors related to COVID-19 positivity rates, cases, District staffing and quarantines, as well as guidance regarding stay-at-home orders, travel guidance, and quarantine restrictions have informed the District's evaluation of its ability to continue in-person instruction.

Dr. Glowacki stated each week during the meeting they discuss the ability to staff schools for in-person instruction. They review quarantine and unfilled positions. Specifically looking at staff on quarantine who are able to work and those on quarantine not able to work and then review the unfilled absences. She noted the weeks leading to Thanksgiving Break have increasing numbers and the availability of substitutes is limited. The administration has pulled support staff to substitute teach classes. She stated the District has the ability to staff in person education for Early Childhood, kindergarten, 1st and 2nd

grades as well as special education students with comprehensive needs. However, a shortage of on-site staff as well as a significant need for and shortage of substitute teachers leads the district to believe that the most predictable, consistent and robust instruction can be provided for older students through remote learning. Therefore, it was recommended that Grades 3-8 would be fully remote for the weeks prior to Winter Break.

Dr. Cremascoli stated the Board would be asked to approve the recommendation to allow in person education for PreK-2nd grades and special education students with comprehensive needs, while having grades 3-8 be fully remote for those two weeks with the intent to transition back to in-person school safely January on January 11th, allowing adequate time for families to plan and navigate screening tests upon return.

President Fabes summarized that while everyone has worked diligently to keep schools open for in-person instruction the commitment for everyone to do their part continues, so wear masks, you're your distance, wash hands, and do not travel. Many chose health and safety and yet some have not. This choice affects the community and external metrics remain high. Staff absences are a challenge and compounding challenges are staff having to remain home due to a variety of factors along with substitutes not being available during December. She expressed support for the administration's recommendation with great sadness, but was reluctant to make a decision immediately regarding instruction during the week of December 14.

Board discussion included possibly holding off on the decision regarding whether to be in-person or remote for the week of December 14th, voting against the recommendation, prioritizing younger students over older students seemed unfair, how to fill the educational gap for older students, concern about losing routines over winter break and the weeks prior exacerbating those routines along with students getting too comfortable at home, allowing grades 3-8 a few days per week in school to maintain learning routines and social relationships, and safety being the priority.

COVID-19 SCREENING TESTING OPTION UPDATE

Dr. Cremascoli stated the administration is reviewing testing options. The first is a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test. PCR is a more sensitive diagnostic test available through Ambry Genetics. The District is piloting a bulk testing program on Thursday. If a student is symptomatic or has experienced exposure, the test will cost \$20 fee with remaining costs billed to insurance. If a student is asymptomatic and has not been exposed and the parent chooses to participate in the bulk testing program the institutional billing fee is \$85. These tests are optional for families to access COVID-19 testing.

Dr. Cremascoli stated the Metrics Team three subcommittees provided updates regarding; operations metrics and ongoing review, staffing and substitute availability, and COVID-19 testing. PCR testing has been provided for staff and has now been extended to staff household members and students. The administration is closely monitoring New Trier's testing pilot and continues to look at screening and surveillance testing options. The Team has reviewed Dr. Campbell's SafeGuard Surveillance Program and other agencies, and has found Dr. Campbell's program to be the best option currently available. Dr. Campbell agreed to present information at the Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, December 7th. The administration may seek approval for a pilot program and possibly implement testing District-wide in January.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Demonte & Miss Lee read public comments sent via email. Emails received regarding keeping schools open for in-person learning over the weeks before and after winter break were from Rucha Patel, Meg Kahdeman, Rachel Heiligman, Davina Young, Joanna Reed, Chase Martinek, Noah Rothschild, David Young, Allie Rothschild, Robin McShane, Kristin Marvin, Claire Hoppenworth, Katy Jones-Pritchard, Bill Springer, Stacey Woehrle, Dan Johnson, Kasia Pore, Lisa Lang, Lindsay Rattay, Lisa Breen, Molly McDermott, Kara Fleming, Christina Ballester, Michelle Coffey, Brian Novelline,

Michelle Baby, Stephen Neilson, and Courtney Greene. Bekim Redzick asked the administration to acknowledge schools closing would be due to staffing issues and thanked teachers and staff who show up. Andrea Zito requested remote learning be extended over the holiday weeks. Christopher Wiczorek said taking 3-8 grades out of the classroom was a huge failure. Evita Vulgaris questioned the commitment of staff who quarantined due to vacation and asked why the week after New Year is being recommended for remote learning.

APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATION REGARDING IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION FOR DECEMBER 7, 2020 – JANUARY 8, 2021

President Fabes acknowledged the previous discussion that took place. She requested a motion from the Board regarding in-person instruction for the weeks of December 7 through January 8

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen to approve the recommendation for an adaptive pause for in-person education for December 7, 2020 – January 8, 2021.

Board members discussed the motion and amending the motion to opt for in-person attendance weekly, or approve the adaptive pause for the week of December 7th and decide on the following weeks at the December 7th Committee of the Whole meeting.

On a roll call vote on the motion, voting “yea” – none; voting “nay” Jon Cesaretti, Frank Panzica, Amy Poheling, Mark Steen, Ellen Sternweiler, Erin Stone, Lisa Schneider-Fabes; absent – none: **Motion Failed.**

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mr. Steen to approve an adaptive pause for the week of December 7, 2020 while prioritizing in-person instruction for the district’s youngest and neediest of students in grades Early Childhood, Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades as well as comprehensive needs students during the week of December 7th; with remote learning provided for 3rd – 8th graders for the same week.

On a roll call vote on the motion, voting “yea” Jon Cesaretti, Frank Panzica, Amy Poheling, Mark Steen, Ellen Sternweiler, Erin Stone, Lisa Schneider-Fabes; voting “nay” – none; absent – none: **Motion Carried.** The Board agreed to consider and decide about in-person instruction during the subsequent weeks of December 14 and January 4th during its Committee of the Whole Meeting on December 7th.

APPROVE FEES FOR INSTITUTIONAL BILLING ACCESS TO AMBRY COVID-19 TESTING

Mr. Panzica moved, seconded by Mrs. Steen, to approve the Ambry PCR COVID-19 testing fees for the 2020-21 school year for individuals who are not symptomatic nor exposed.

On a roll call vote on the motion, voting “yea” Jon Cesaretti, Frank Panzica, Amy Poheling, Mark Steen, Ellen Sternweiler, Erin Stone, Lisa Schneider-Fabes; voting “nay” – none; absent – none: **Motion Carried.**

Being no further business, Mrs. Sternweiler moved, seconded by Mr. Panzica, to adjourn the special meeting of the Board of Education at 9:39 p.m. by **Unanimous Roll Call Vote.**

President

Secretary