

NORTHBROOK SCHOOL DISTRICT 28  
MINUTES of a BOARD of EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
HELD TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2020

A special meeting of the Board of Education, District 28, Cook County, Illinois, was held via electronic format on Tuesday evening, July 21, 2020. Board members, administration, and staff attended via an online Zoom video conference. The public was able to attend via a live-stream audio link through the District 28 YouTube Channel.

President Tracy Katz Muhl called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Present:

Jennifer Gallinson  
Michael Gilmore  
Tony Forchetti  
Michelle Kohler  
Lou Gross  
Mara Silver-Schack  
Tracy Katz Muhl

Absent: none.

Also present were: Dr. Larry Hewitt, Superintendent; Dr. Kris Raitzer, Asst. Superintendent; Jessica Donato, Chief School Business Official; Michelle Jackson, Director of Learning; Dr. Kelly Sculles, Director of Student Services; Terry Ryan, Communications Director; Pam Streeter, School Nurse; Christine Lake, Assistant Principal at Northbrook Junior High; Ramsin Israel, District Computer Technician; Dr. Jenna Duffy, Asst. Dir. of Student Services; Rebecca Boston, School Nurse; Judi Epcke, Instructional Technology Director; Pat Thome, Meadowbrook Principal; Dr. Ginny Hiltz, Greenbriar Principal; Dr. Scott Meek, Northbrook Junior High Principal; Nora Geraghty, Asst. Dir. of Student Services; Mary Sturgill, Westmoor Principal; Joel Gallegos, Director of Maintenance; and Dr. Heather Schultz, Asst. Dir. of Student Services.

A special provision of the Open Meetings Act as amended by Gov. Pritzker allows the board to meet remotely in the interest of public safety while providing a live audio stream to the community. The upcoming regular board meeting scheduled for July 28 will be held in person at NBJH and conducted according to safety procedures. The board will continue to use virtual commenting procedures in order for everyone to participate more safely.

**VISITORS' COMMENTS**

The Visitors' Comments online form was posted on the district website from 6:30

p.m. to 7:05 p.m.

The following comments were read by Dr. Hewitt:

- A parent commented that she appreciated the effort that went into developing the reopening plan.
- Another parent asked if families would be able to change their learning option.
- An unsigned letter from “Northbrook Educators” asked the board to consider opening school with remote learning only.

## **PLAN FOR REOPENING SCHOOLS 2020-21**

President Katz Muhl said an incredible amount of work was spent this summer developing a reopening plan. She thanked the staff and administration involved in both task forces and all those who were involved for their time and commitment to the children of District 28.

Every plan from every district is different. The district plan to offer either full-time in-person learning or fully remote learning is the result of having enough space within the district’s four schools to accommodate safety measures of physical distancing. The district is utilizing its financial resources to accommodate this effort. Finally, she noted that the environment is changing and we all need to be prepared for changes. The meeting was framed on the 25-minute video that Dr. Hewitt prepared and shared with the community on July 17.

Dr. Hewitt opened his remarks commenting that the 2020-21 school year is going to be different than any other. However, the staff is better prepared for changing circumstances than we were in the spring. District 28 operates under guidance and direction of Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Public Health. While we have some local autonomy, these entities provide us with mandates and guidance. There is no such thing as no-risk, the district is implementing good mitigation strategies that reduce risk. Finally, the district will make adjustments as policies and procedures change. He thanked the Health and Safety Task Force and the Teaching and Learning Task Force for their contributions throughout the summer in helping to formulate this plan.

President Katz Muhl stated that board members individually sent questions to her prior to the meeting so that questions could be organized, and answered by topic. A Frequently Asked Questions document will be developed and shared with parents following the meeting.

Questions about the reopening plan covered the following topics:

Remote learning vs. in-person learning

What is remote going to look like?

What happens when somebody tests positive, whether a child or someone in the

household, that requires a child to quarantine? Are they shifted into remote classroom or will it be handled differently?

Parents are being asked to chose either full-time in-person learning or full-time remote learning. Responses are due by noon July 28.

Dr. Raitzer and Mrs. Jackson provided an overview of how the Remote Learning Academy program is being developed by a task force of teachers. They evaluated student, parent and staff spring surveys and research of best practices.

(During this explanation, the live video stream was lost. The meeting paused until the connection was re-established. The stream was reviewed to restart where it had broken off.)

Some teachers will be assigned exclusively to the RLA while others will be assigned to in-person learning. The idea is to keep students with the same teachers through the entire school year. If in-person learning reverts to remote, students will stay with the same teachers. The curriculum is designed for both environments to take place simultaneously. Therefore, the programs will not allow for students to switch back and forth.

Families are encouraged to select the learning environment that best fits their needs. The district will strive to provide as many details as possible. Remote learning would be better for children with health issues or if someone in the household is at risk. If a child did well with remote learning, that may be something to consider from the parent perspective.

In the event that the rise in COVID-19 cases causes the state to step backward to Phase 3 of Reopen Illinois, the ISBE did ask school districts to prioritize students with IEP, 504s, and those who have English Language services for in-person instruction.

Once we make the decision on how many teachers we need for instruction for remote and in-person, the programs are not interchangeable in that they are not going to be doing the exact same types of learning activities although they'll be covering the same grade level standards.

Are there situations we would treat as exceptional circumstances where we might move students in or out of the remote academy? We understand there are always exceptions and challenges people face.

Students with IEPs or high risk medical needs, may need to have a hybrid model. We will work closely with the student services team and parents to make accommodations for individual students.

In-person learning safety

Three touchstone topics were covered: the use of face coverings, 6 feet of social distancing and cleaning/sanitation. Dr. Hewitt outlined the following:

Face coverings: ISBE published clear guidelines, with respect to face coverings. Children ages 3 years old and up have to have a face mask. There are some conditions where children with a doctor's note would not have to wear a mask. But parameters are strict. Masks will be the responsibility of the parents. However we will have a supply of disposable masks ready to go in case students forget them or something happens to their mask while at school. If a student takes off their mask, they have strategies to work with the student to help us all be as safe as possible. We will look at mask refusal like any other behavior. Teachers will be working with students so that they understand the why behind it as being part of the community. We anticipate a small number of doctor's notes regarding masks for students with high-risk medical needs and have already received preliminary notice from some parents. As a result, we will be working with individual families to determine the best environment for students to engage in learning, whether that be in-person or remote.

Six-foot distancing: All classrooms are designed so that all desks will be 6 feet apart.

Personal hygiene: Various sanitary procedures and protocols will be in place. For water fountains, the water drinking bubblers will not be accessible but water bottle filling stations will be open. There will be dedicated custodial staff to clean high-touch areas several times throughout the day. All custodial staff will be focused on deep cleaning every space in the building including classroom and bathroom. Electrostatic sprayers have been purchased for every school so that all surfaces in a given room can be disinfected in a short amount of time. Carpet spotters will help with food spills that may occur from students eating in their classrooms. The junior high is considering the best way to keep surface areas clean as students move from class to class.

Recess – Staff will provide support and strategies on how to play apart and how to take a mask break safely. The fields will be sectioned off with quadrants on the playground, and two areas for the tents.

### **DAILY HEALTH CHECK**

Four questions were developed by the school nurses based on IDPH and CDC guidelines. Parents will be required to answer them every day before students enter the building or a bus. Instructional Technology Coordinator Judi Epcke is researching digital tools to accomplish this.

Further discussion revolved around symptoms that are also common with other ailments. This is being further explored. The nurses are also working on a parent education piece on when to keep their student home.

## **EXCLUSION OF STUDENTS/STAFF**

Every situation is different. If we have a positive case, parents will be notified, much like someone who has whooping cough.

Quarantine – as we read the guidance, the concept of close proximity comes into play, which is defined as closer than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes. Our classrooms will be set up so the likelihood of this is minimal.

### **BUSES**

Can families get a refund?

We are currently collecting emails and data of parents who wish to opt out, and will provide refunds.

### **STAFF**

A staff survey back in June indicated 70% would feel comfortable returning if the district follows IDPH guidelines, cleaning and sanitizing and common areas sanitized frequently, although that has most likely changed as we get closer to the school year. The biggest stumbling block for staff is related to childcare for their own children.

As general concerns are raised on how we make this work, people have different risk tolerances and some are comfortable and others not so. We're trying to work with staff members individually to see if there are accommodations that can be made to assist staff.

### **FACILITIES AND TECH**

How is work going on staging the rooms with spacing and furniture?

Layouts for the most part are complete. We've identified furniture going into storage. HVAC system – we are changing amount of outside air coming into the buildings – tripling from the normal 0% to 10% to a minimum of 30-35% which our equipment can handle safely. Also we are upgrading filters on large air handles and rooftop units.

Are we ready to roll out iPads for last phase of Learning first with K, 3 and 6?

The new iPads arrived yesterday and will be rolled out as planned.

### **IN-PERSON SCHOOL DAY**

School hours and arrival/dismissal will be staggered to minimize students at the entrances and in the hallways. However, specific plans will depend on the number of students who enroll in in-person learning.

Lunches – NBJH will continue to use the food service with a predictable menu so students will pre-order every Friday for the next week. Lunches will be delivered to the students.

We will be using the tent and lunchroom for students to eat.

At the elementary school, grade levels will have staggered lunches, with some having recess first and others starting with lunch, then switching.

#### KIDCARE

At this time, we have families who have registered for am and pm KidCare. We are working closely with program director to identify spaces, including using an outdoor tent as much as possible. Safety protocols with staff and students will be established.

#### NBJH EXTRA CURRICULARS

No final decision has been made about sports and extra curricular activities.

#### MUSIC

We will be continuing instrumental music and choir programs and will provide additional information. These programs will be available to students in remote and in person. Elementary students will rehearse at their home school.

#### BATHROOM PROCEDURES

We will work in partnership with nurses and custodial staff to ensure safety guidelines. Current guidelines limit the number of students in the bathroom at one time. We plan to install plexiglass between the sinks.

#### NBJH PASSING PERIODS

Students will not access lockers. Passing period will be staggered for departure and arrival. There will be two-way traffic marked in the hallways and one-way in the stairwells.

#### ELEMENTARY SPECIALS

Specials teachers will move room to room. Each team is meeting to adapt to mobile format and the district will order equipment to support instruction in a new way. When P.E. is held within the classroom, students will have to be masked. When outside, kids can have their masks off. We will not be sharing equipment unless it is cleaned between uses.

#### NBJH P.E.

No locker rooms or gym uniforms. Students will have to wear soft-soled shoes or can change into them.

#### NBJH STRUCTURE

The variety of courses and academic levels becomes very challenging and we will know more once students are scheduled for their various classes. 80-minute blocks will eliminate some transitions. Cohorting will be used for electives.

#### MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

We will continue to use our SEL curriculum. We will be providing teachers additional resources to address student needs as we adapt to living through a

pandemic and social unrest

#### WHY NOT A HYBRID APPROACH?

As we began evaluating our space, we determined we could accommodate all students, but also wanted to offer remote to provide families with options. The various hybrid models are challenging for a lot of parents because of the inconsistent daily schedule. In-person learning is the goal from the state.

#### REMOTE LEARNING

Improvements for this school year are based on survey results and teachers' experiences.

Two main goals for RLA are for all students to receive instruction aligned to state standards and to receive support to meet those standards. We will provide a comprehensive education including experiences in art, music, and P.E., as well as support in SEL development. Students will follow a daily schedule. They will begin their day at 9 a.m. and end at 3 p.m. There will be dedicated teachers for RLA. Some resources will be the same as in-person and some will be different due to nature of online learning. There will be leveled courses in math, science, world language and ELA. Will need to make adjustments to electives, such as woodworking.

Elementary will include reading, writing, math, social studies and science regularly. They will have art and music weekly. Spanish is still in question. Students will have five hours of daily instruction time.

Students will meet with their teacher daily and have independent time as well, such as mini zoom lessons then time to work on it on their own. Students can work independently and have some choice as to when to do it. We will use the most important district assessments to measure progress. Remote will have the same grading practices and report card. The younger the student, the more support they will need.

What would remote learning students be able to access in person?

Can students have any in-person experiences?

Right now we see it as RLA will learn with other students in that setting. That group will become their cohort and cadre. The community and connection in belonging will be important in the setting in which they are a part of daily. They will be able to participate in before and after school activities.

How will we build cohesiveness for students in RLA?

Similarly to in-person, they will have meet the teacher and other events. They will also have get-to-know-you activities, community building via Zoom, All About Me collages. We believe in the value of social and emotional learning so we are going to think creatively to build that community.

#### YOUNG EXPLORERS

A task force was formed to follow guidelines from the National Association for the

Education of Young Children and additional resources from community preschools. We know young children learn best through play. The team determined they needed to reinvent early childhood learning. In order to ensure play-based instruction, they developed instructional pods. Students will be in groups of three to five for a minimum of two weeks. Each pod will be 6 feet or more apart. Young Explorers will maintain existing hours. All research supports 6-10 minute attention span for children in the age group. They need parent support and tech support for remote learning. They will have one-to-one devices, an activity grid and will provide individual supply kits. Tuition for remote is TBD.

#### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Student services staff reached out to families to help them make decision on in-person or remote learning. All programs that operate in the district will be provided this school year. NSSSED is also working to hold in-person learning at our schools.

#### **SCHOOL CALENDAR**

The state is giving every school district five remote learning planning days that can be used at the district's discretion. It will be beneficial to have a full week devoted to professional development, planning, going deeper in tech tools. Dr. Hewitt discussed the need to add an additional teacher planning day.

There being no further questions, it was moved by Member Gross and seconded by Member Forchetti that the Board approve allowing parents the option of choosing daily onsite or daily remote instruction with students, beginning August 20. (adjusted to August 24 at the Board's July 28, 2020 meeting).

On a roll call vote, the following voted Aye: Members Gross, Forchetti, Kohler, Silver-Schack, Gallinson, Gilmore, and Katz Muhl.

#### **(In)**

At 11:19 p.m., it was moved by Member Kohler and seconded by Member Silver-Schack that the Board of Education go into Closed Session to discuss: the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees of the District or legal counsel for the District, including testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity as authorized by 5ILCS 120/2 © (1)

On a roll call vote, the following voted Aye: Members Kohler, Silver-Schack, Gallinson, Gilmore, Forchetti, Gross, and Katz Muhl. Nay: none. Abstain: none. Absent: none. Motion carried.

#### **(Out)**

At 11:49 p.m., it was moved by Member Gallinson and seconded by Member

Gross that the Board of Education return to Regular Session.

On a roll call vote, the following voted Aye: Members Gallinson, Gross, Forchetti, Kohler, Silver-Schack, Gilmore and Katz Muhl. Nay: none. Abstain: none. Absent: none. Motion carried.

**(Adjournment)**

At 11:50 p.m., it was moved by Member Kohler and seconded by Member Silver-Schack that the Board of Education adjourn.

All members present voted Aye. Motion carried.

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Larry A. Hewitt, Secretary

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Tracy Katz Muhl, President