



BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

January 10, 2022 | Hilliard Darby High School

MEETING NOTES

Meeting Notes are not official until voted on by the Board of Education at its following Regular Meeting.

- A1 President called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m.
- A2 Members present: Mrs. Crowley, Mrs. Long, Mrs. Murdoch, Mr. Perry, and Mr. Vorst

B PROGRAMS / PRESENTATIONS

- B1 No scheduled presentation

C ROUTINES

- C1 The agenda is correct, as presented.
- C2 The Board of Education adopted the agenda as presented.
- C3 The Board of Education approved the December 2021 Treasurer's Report.

Mr. Wilson noted an anomaly in the expenditures for December 2021 versus December 2020. Most of that anomaly is related to the \$1.2 million in transfer to the building fund for the preschool expansion.

- C4 The Board of Education approved the minutes from the following meetings:
 - a. December 8, 2021 – Special meeting minutes
 - b. December 13, 2021 – Regular meeting minutes
 - c. December 13, 2021 – Meeting notes

D PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Board of Education appreciates citizen interest in meetings of the board. This place on the agenda is set aside to hear comments from visitors. When called, please go to the microphone so that remarks may be clearly heard and recorded. You must give your name and limit comments to three minutes. Comments must be respectful and professional in nature. Board members may or may not ask questions or make comments. No board member has the power or authority to act for the board; therefore, no response from an individual board member should be interpreted as an official action of the board. Portions of this meeting are being recorded.

Robert Murdoch

Hello, my name is Robert Murdoch and I live in Hilliard, Ohio.

I have come before you to counter what I presume will be the latest round of panic mongering by those who request that you switch to remote schooling to benefit the children who they continue to believe are at extreme risk of either catching or spreading COVID-19 even though nearly two full years of data dispute those arguments. Children are not at significant risk from COVID-19. Per the Ohio Department of Health coronavirus dashboard, only twenty-four children, ages 0-19, have died from COVID-19 over this two-year

period in Ohio. Before anybody accuses me of being callous about that number, I ask everybody in this room to consider the following. Ohio's population is approximately 11.5 million people, and only twenty-four children died during a two-year period. I don't even need to look it up to know that more children died in car accidents, drug overdoses, and suicides during that same two-year period. As for adults, I don't know what to tell you. Adults now have access to all of the vaccines, and simply because the vaccines are proving ineffective against the omicron variant doesn't mean we should punish children by messing up their school year once again. So what is the current panic, which is exactly what it is panic, about? The best I can tell the public and even a supreme court justice seem to be woefully misinformed about the omicron variant. Here are some facts about omicron. Omicron spreads quickly, but despite what you hear every day, omicron is not filling up our hospitals and not killing our kids.

A recent study that compared outcomes in both adults and kids before omicron emerged tells the true story. For adults, 3.9% of those who got the delta variant required hospitalization, while only 1.75% of those who got omicron needed hospitalization. For kids who caught the delta variant, 2.62% need to be hospitalized, while only 0.9% of those who got omicron had to be hospitalized. Indeed, it's hard to get statistics on the actual mortality rate of omicron because so few people have actually died from it. What's going on in hospitals and cases? I think the answer is pretty obvious. Lots of people are catching omicron, which is much like catching a cold or mild flu. Because of the panic and their inability to locate any rapid tests in stores, they go to the nearest emergency room to get tested, and even if they test positive are more often than not sent home. I have said since the early summer of 2020 that there is an incredible gap between cases and hospitalizations or mortality that is even more pronounced with the omicron variant. I would like to commend this board for what I perceive to be its commitment to the only course of action available to it that is best for Hilliard students. Students need to be kept in school as long as possible. Should the situation arise where teacher or bus driver absences force a change in school attendance strategy, I hope Superintendent Stewart and this board of education will consider alternatives to virtual/remote instruction. Yanking students out of school every time there is a surge in cases is a recipe for educational disaster. Please do not sacrifice the education of our students to another panic case again. Thank you.

Mrs. Long asked Brian to clarify whether the beeping from the timer was a 10-second warning or the end of three minutes. Brian replied that the beep indicates the end of three minutes.

Lisa Chaffee

Good evening, I am Lisa Chaffee and I live in Hilliard.

What I want to address is that, unfortunately, we are still having to mask our kids. There is now overwhelming proof.... I have emailed all of you (Kara, I just now got your email, so I'll send it to you) updated information and statistics that have now been released on the validity and efficacy of masking. It should be a parent's choice as to whether or not we mask our kids. As Mr. Murdoch said, omicron is relatively mild. We all know this. We hear it in the news about the panic, and it is time to stop living in fear. Our kids are being devastated by having to wear masks. Some kids, granted, it doesn't affect them. For other kids, it's causing psychological issues. It's causing learning delays in younger kids because they need to see their teacher's faces. They need to see their lips move when they're learning how to pronounce words. Just the nonverbal communication of smiling is so vastly important to the mental well-being of our kids. Dr. Fauci said in an email, "a mask is much more appropriate for someone who is infected and you're trying to prevent them from infecting other people than it is in protecting you against infection. If you look at the mask that you buy in a drug store, the leakage around that doesn't really do much to protect you. Now, in the United States, there is absolutely no reason whatsoever to wear a

mask.” That was an email he sent in February of 2020. In a speech in January 2021 to HHS regulators, he explained the fruitlessness of masking asymptomatic people. He said, “the one thing historically people need to realize is that even if there is some asymptomatic transmission, in all of the history of respiratory born viruses of any type, asymptomatic transmission has never been the driver of outbreaks. The driver of outbreaks is always a symptomatic person. If there is a rare asymptomatic person that might transmit an epidemic, it is not driven by asymptomatic carriers.” One thing I encourage you to look at is the statistics. They are not telling us if all of the people in the hospital are asymptomatic or symptomatic. Were they admitted because they have COVID, or were they admitted for another reason and just happened to test positive for COVID? Please, as you are discussing this issue, look at all of that data as well. Do the right thing and make it a choice as to whether or not our kids are masked. Thank you.

Mrs. Crowley asked if the teachers have access to face shields in the case of teaching phonics? Mr. Stewart replied that we are able to provide teachers face shields upon request.

Kelley Arnold

(Written transcript provided by speaker.)

We all know each other, but for the record, my name is Kelley Arnold.

Good evening. I’m here to speak to a topic that has risen its head in the community once again – the usage of masks in our schools. While there is no current action item on the agenda for any proposed changes, there is a petition circulating once again to make masks optional as there is a belief it might find a more receptive audience at this date.

I sincerely hope our district will not only continue to heed the advice of the professionals of the Ohio Hospital Association and Ohio Children’s Hospital Association in their open letter of December 28th, but also will step up its requirements within school district facilities.

My daughter is a 2020 graduate of this very building – Darby High School. She cannot be here tonight to speak on this topic as she is wrapping up a 12-hour shift as an EMT with an ambulance company. In fact, her morning began with a COVID pneumonia patient run. Many of their transfers are taking significantly longer as they arrive at hospitals that are overwhelmed with patients, thus longer to find a bed for those in need. She also works within Emergency Communications at Children’s Hospital on the weekends. She sees the status for our countywide network of hospitals. They are all routinely at high levels, and those hospitals that might need to call for a divert status are unable to do so as the whole system is strained. This is not just an abstract you hear on the news – this is what she encounters with every shift. This means longer transport times, if transport is even available, for kids, and adults, that need service from other hospital such as a pediatric cancer patients being served at OSU.

Within that context, it is our communal duty to help our health care workers. It is our duty as a school district to help keep our students, teachers, staff, families, and wider community to remain as safe as we possibly can. To that end, it is imperative that not only should masking remain in place in our school day setting, but at any time people are gathered within our buildings, such as this evening. The virus does not magically vanish at the end of the school day.

We cannot simply give up on this essential recommendation from our hospitals over issues of compliance and enforcement. What example do we set for our students when we give up on rules, well because... (shrug)... why?

The students in the spring of 2020 tried to teach us a valuable lesson via the Dear HCSD Instagram account – we cannot give power to immature bullies in the face of the safety of our community. Until such time as the medical professionals within our hospital community advises otherwise, mask requirements are necessary at all times within our Hilliard School facilities. Thank you.

Mrs. Murdoch addressed Mr. Stewart about his working closely with Franklin County Public Health and the Ohio Department of Health. She stated that in 2020, their dashboard included metrics on hospital utilization and capacity. They have since dropped that. Do you have access to any of that, or do you think we could request that we get that data once again? Mr. Stewart responded that he didn't know the answer, but he will find out.

Mr. Vorst, do our students have the option to wear a face shield or alternative face coverings, or are they required to have a cloth or surgical face covering? Mr. Abraham, Director of Student Well-Being, explained that parents could submit a face protection exemption form requesting a face shield instead of a mask. The form needs to be completed by the child's physician. The form is available on the district website at <https://www.hilliardschools.org/wp-content/uploads/Face-Protection-Exemption-Form-Medical-8-21.pdf>. Of the fifty-four exemption requests we have received, only one request was denied because the physician refused to sign the form.

Mrs. Crowley added that as a teacher, her students are at least six feet away from her when she is wearing a face shield instead of a face mask. I wear the face shield only while teaching phonics so students can see my mouth while making sounds.

Mr. Vorst asked what specific data we are following to justify the mandate, or is our data the recommendation of certain health authorities? Mr. Abraham responded that we are following the recommendation by the CDC, Ohio Department of Health, and Franklin County Public Health. Mr. Stewart explained there are a lot of data points that we take into consideration, but we have not set specific metrics for moving one direction or the other. Indeed, the recommendation of our local and state public health agencies are things we take into consideration.

Mrs. Murdoch asked if they would be discussing the data more in-depth on Saturday (board retreat). Mr. Stewart replied yes.

Mrs. Long noted a COVID update later on tonight's agenda.

Kemmily Kwok

(Written transcript provided by speaker.)

First, I would like to congratulate the new school board members today. These are unprecedented times and we hope the board will make good decisions and do right by our children.

Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm Kemmily and I'm a parent to two kids in the Hilliard city school district. I'm standing here today to show my support for the continued use of masks in our schools. I thank the superintendent for continuing to support masks. Look, we all want our children to have a great Hilliard education and for them to thrive in our schools. We have 2 groups of parents. Some parents don't believe in wearing masks because they don't like to be forced and be told what to do, and they believe in making their own mask choice. While many other parents believe in wearing masks because they want to protect

themselves and others, especially those with immunocompromised bodies. Regardless of what side you're on, you want your children to stay in school and have a good education. Let's think about this for a moment. Today the Omicron virus is spreading like wildfire. You probably know someone recently who got Covid over the holidays, or someone who is battling Covid right now. Or maybe you yourself had a mild case of Covid, and because you didn't wear a mask, you unknowingly spread it to someone who had lung disease who later caught it and ended up in the hospital. With this new variant, it had been reported that children especially, are getting hit more and some are ending up in hospitals with Covid complications. What happens when so many people get sick? Our hospital beds are full. Our teachers and staff are working overtime. Our substitute teachers are in high demand due to full time teachers being out. But guess what, we don't even have enough substitute teachers. We don't have enough bus drivers. Children who are out sick due to Covid, now can't return to school for a minimum of 5 days or more, that takes them out of an ideal learning environment. The school's resources are spreading thin to combat this pandemic. At this rate, it's a possibility the schools could shut down! Is that what we call a good education for our kids? Why should we burden our schools when we together, can do our part by simply wearing a mask? Yet, some people still want the choice to not mask up? Have you heard of long Covid symptoms where some are getting heart issues, neurological issues, and a whole host of unknown medical issues months after getting Covid? Why do we want to risk all that in addition to burdening the schools, when a simple mask will help prevent the spread of Covid? According to the CDC, folks who had always worn a mask during high-risk exposures experienced a greater than 70% reduced risk of acquiring infection compared with those who did not wear masks. I personally masked up at home when both of my kids tested positive over the holidays. I'd like to say that with me being vigilant with wearing masks, that was why I haven't gotten any Covid symptoms and never tested positive even when taking care of my sick kids.

The combination of masks, vaccines and other mitigation measures work together to slow the spread. But the #1 thing we can do for our students and teachers, is mask up. And when I mean mask up, I don't just mean wearing a mask. I mean wearing them properly over your nose and mouth, not below your chins. It is only as effective as how you treat it to be. Our students are our priority, and our schools must function with the continued use of masks. Listed to the medical professionals too- they are tired and need your help. Thank You.

Shelly King

Hello, my name is Shelly King. I have two kids who attend Hilliard City Schools – a sixth-grader and a fourth-grader. I would like to say that I was very thankful that the Superintendent extended the mask mandate for the school year and grades seven and above. I was happy that my sixth grader would have to wear a mask, but he rode the bus with seventh and eighth-graders. It was terrifying that he would be exposed to kids not wearing masks. I just don't understand why parents think it is ok to play Russian roulette with your kids by saying there's a very minimal risk of them getting hurt or very sick because you just don't know. You don't know what's going to if you, your children, or anyone you know gets COVID. There are co-morbidities, situations where people believe you're only going to get very sick if you are x-y-z...(inaudible), and that is not the case. We have seen omicron spread like crazy and delta before that. What is going to come next? There is no hurry to take masks off. Children are not complaining about wearing masks. Their parents are complaining because it's inconvenient and annoying. Nobody wants to wear a mask. Nobody is jumping for joy having to look for their mask to get into a store or public. It's frustrating and annoying, but it's also helping stop the spread of an illness that we still don't know much about. Things are changing, and the people who get sick are changing. It's a constant change. Now we have people with other medical issues who cannot have surgeries scheduled for January because the hospitals are overflowing with COVID patients. In some cases, doctors and nurses are not available

because they or a family member has COVID. The bare minimum we can do is wear a mask in public. I don't want the school to shut down because there are not enough teachers, bus drivers, lunch workers, or custodians. We all want our kids to be in school. A mask mandate is a bare minimum until things calm down. I respect and love having my kids in Hilliard Schools. I believe you have made the right decisions until this point, and I hope that continues. Thank you.

Mrs. Murdoch asked that when the high school students were mask-optional, weren't they still required to wear masks on school buses? Mr. Stewart replied that was correct.

Erin Reilly-Sanders

(Written transcript provided by speaker.)

Hi, I'm Erin Reilly-Sanders, one of the leaders of the Hilliard Parents for Masks, Science, and Diversity group, a growing grassroots movement of Hilliard City Schools families.¹

Today, I sent my child to school, knowing that there was an almost 80% likelihood of someone in her class being covid positive.² This is the equivalent of about 19 sick children and adults in one small elementary school.³ To be honest, this is almost twice as high than when I would have pulled her out of school, had the choice been mine alone.⁴ All I can do is hope that sick people stayed home, and that masks are enough to keep my vaccinated, but-yet-still-so-vulnerable child from getting sick.

In fact, our county is at a seven day average of over 200 cases per 100 thousand people per day.⁵ That's over twice as much as the CDC recommendation for closing schools during earlier surges.⁶ As much as we love education and especially value in-person education, eventually there is a tipping point between the risks of getting and spreading super transmissible illnesses, and the value of in-person education. Our community could have chosen to prioritize in-person education by instating mask mandates, getting vaccinated, imposing business curfews, and other methods to keep cases at a reasonable level that would not unduly endanger students and staff. Unfortunately, we did not.

We can "pay" for keeping children in school with juvenile cases, or with extra mitigation methods. Our children, ages 6-11, are not sufficiently vaccinated at a mere 23% compared to a recommended 70-90% vaccination rate.⁷ They need you to add mitigation methods when cases are high.⁸ As we mentioned in our group letter, sent this morning, you can provide better masks,⁹ implement screening testing,¹⁰ cancel extracurriculars,¹¹ leave windows open,¹² add room air filtration,¹³ increase physical distance,¹⁴ and quarantine those who have been exposed.¹⁵ Note that screening testing is now recommended by the CDC for moderate community transmission of 10 cases per 100k people,¹⁶ which we are now 20 times above. Even if these have initial costs or logistical inconveniences, they are still cheaper than children with covid,¹⁷ comforting children through the loss or limitations of their loved-ones,¹⁸ tripled juvenile diabetes cases,¹⁹ and other yet-to-be-discovered drawbacks of having covid-19. Your choices to follow the recommendations of large numbers of child health and education experts²⁰ are what will help keep my child and my family safer at school.

Erin Reilly-Sanders, PhD in Education (Ohio State University)

¹ of almost 300 members within Hilliard

² 79% on 1/10/22 for a group of 20 people within Franklin County, per

<https://covid19risk.biosci.gatech.edu/> which uses data from <https://github.com/nytimes/covid-19-data>

³ based on 24 classrooms

⁴ 50% probability, basically a coin flip, is my preferred personal maximum.

⁵ 204.8 on 1/10/2022 per https://covidactnow.org/us/ohio-oh/county/franklin_county/?s=27921682

⁶ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/19/health/cobb-county-schools-georgia-covid/index.html> which cites <http://cdn.cnn.com/cnn/2021/images/08/18/physician-letter-to-cobb-schools.08-16-2021.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/12/1053891686/when-will-schools-end-mask-requirements>

⁸ “The researchers found that when schools used seven or more mitigation measures, the excess risk associated with in-person schooling mostly disappeared—and completely disappeared when 10 or more mitigation measures were reported.” based on pre-delta strains <https://hub.jhu.edu/2021/05/03/in-person-school-covid-19-risk/>

⁹ <https://yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/a-quick-note-on-masks-and-cdc-guidance>

which includes a nice chart from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/cloth-face-mask-omicron-11640984082>

¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#screening-testing>

¹¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#screening-testing> recommends canceling high risk activities “that involve singing, shouting, band, or exercise, especially when conducted indoors” during high transmission (>100 cases per 100k people and test positivity ≥10%), using football and wrestling as examples; supported by <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33927057/>

¹² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12guidance.html#ventilation>

¹³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12guidance.html#ventilation>

¹⁴ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33927057/>

¹⁵ People quarantining should not be removing their mask for any reason within school buildings- “Do not go to places where you are unable to wear a mask, such as restaurants and some gyms, and avoid eating around others at home and at work” <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your/health/quarantine-isolation.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#screening-testing>

¹⁷ especially given the chances of lasting effects

<https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/scary-and-confusing-when-kids-suffer-long-covid-19>

¹⁸ <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/more-140000-us-children-lost-primary-or-secondary-caregiver-due-covid-19-pandemic> and <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/11/news-hidden-pandemic>, I haven't seen anything yet on the effects of the translated effects from caregivers with covid or post-covid to their children

¹⁹ children who have had covid are 2.66 times more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/masonbissada/2022/01/07/children-with-covid-face-increased-risk-of-diabetes-cdc-finds/?sh=51b7937e3875>

²⁰ As mentioned in our group letter, CDC, AAP, NEA, FCHD, ODH, NCH, OHA, and the governor, among others

Mrs. Murdoch thanked the speaker for the earlier email with links to all of the data points. I appreciate when people cite statistics or data, they back it up with their source.

Mr. Perry added his thanks to Lisa Chaffee for the links she provided. It’s important to me to know what folks are looking at when giving us information.

Sarah Myers

(Written transcript provided by speaker.)

My name is Sarah Myers and I have a first grader at Washington. First, I'd like to say congratulations to you all on your election or re-election to the school board. I know this is a big job.

I'd like to speak tonight both as a parent but also as a social worker and a mental health professional. I'd like to speak in favor of continued masking, particularly as it relates to our student's mental health.

I've often heard people say that wearing a mask is detrimental to their child's mental health. That their children are crushed to not see their teacher's faces or to see their friends laugh, which I get. We all want to see that.

But I think NOT wearing a mask is worse for their mental health, and here's why: Student mental health was already struggling before the pandemic and many of them found support in their community - the school and the people around them. COVID disrupted that.

As a general rule, when masks and other mitigation measures are not taken, people get sick. They have to quarantine. They might be in the hospital. For most people, that might not be a problem - I've heard talk about the "survival rate" of COVID - but for many, that survival comes at a cost of long-term disability and illness, and, at the very least, time lost away from their community.

For students, this means they saw their parents get sick. Their friend's parents get sick. Their teachers. It means lost holidays and cancelled sports games and life is generally different now. This instability and loss means trauma. These past few years have been traumatic for all of us.

Being part of a community help process trauma. Again, for our kids, that's mostly school. They need this community to be as stable and healthy as possible.

Consistent masking, both inside the classroom and at other school sponsored events, is the best way to do that. It also models resilience and teaches that we can do hard things, especially when we are doing it for the sake of more vulnerable friends and neighbors.

If we are truly pro-mental health, we need to do what it takes to keep our community together for the long term. That means wearing masks. Thank you.

Mrs. Murdoch thanked everyone for speaking. Whether you spoke for or against a mask mandate, I think I heard that everyone wants to keep our kids in school, in front of their teachers, five days a week. Because we all know that is the best educational experience for our kids. That made me feel really good. Thank you for expressing that point.

Mr. Vorst seconded what Beth said. We do appreciate that. In discussions with each other, the bar for shutting down schools is extremely high. I think we have learned a lot from the damage that happened last time, and we need to do everything we can to prevent it from happening again. The specifics of how we prevent it are to be discussed, but there is a lot of support for keeping kids in school. The damage it did was terrible, and we don't want to do it again.

E CONSENT AGENDA

- E1 Approved the following Certified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.
- E2 Approved the following Classified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.
- E3 Approved the following trip requests:
 - a. Davidson Baseball, Cincinnati, OH – March 24, 2022
 - b. Bradley Softball, Willowood, OH – April 15, 2022
 - c. Bradley Softball, Lagrange, OH – April 29, 2022

The Board of Education approved item E1 through E3, including certified and classified personnel matters. You can find the complete list of personnel matters as an attachment to the Minutes.

F ACTION AGENDA

- F1 The Board of Education approved the following December 2021 Winter Graduates:

Hilliard Bradley High School

Tyrese Nana Osei Asare
Gunner Alan Garrett
Garret Lee Hunnicut
Fatuma Abdi Mohamud
Lucia Carolina Ramirez
Treyvor Jonathan Ziessler

Hilliard Darby High School

Dylan James Crawford
Shamsulddin Hasan
Jaelyn Janet Lashea Johnson

Hilliard Davidson High School

Ruzan Riad Yousef Ali
Maxxwell Michael Anthony
Benjamin Joseph Bartels
Marilyn Shane Briseno-Cisneros
Evelyn Rose Erdy
Naheen Tahseen Rahman
Carolyn Ruth Taphorn

Mrs. Long offered her congratulations to all of the graduates.

G REPORTS / INFORMATION / EXHIBIT ITEM

- G1 Committee Reports

Mrs. Long mentioned the following upcoming meetings:

- ISPTO on January 18
- Facilities task force on February 2 (Members of this task force have been selected from the community. If you have any constituents you would like to recommend for this committee, please give their information to Mr. Stewart by the end of this week.)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee on February 1
- Facilities committee on March 4
- Policy review committee on March 11
- HEF on January 26
- Denim & Diamonds (HEF fundraiser) is scheduled for March 4 (7-11 p.m. at Heritage Golf Club)

If any of the board members are not available to attend an assigned committee meeting, please let me know to get someone else to represent us.

Mr. Perry explained that the Denim & Diamonds is HEF's major fundraiser for providing grants to teachers.

G2 Enrollment

As of January 3, 2022, our total enrollment is 16,368 (15,983 are housed in our buildings & 385 are in the online academy). Therefore, our total enrollment is approximately 130 more students from January 2021.

Mrs. Long asked if we had noticed any trends in kindergarten registration. Mr. Stewart responded that kindergarten registration opened on January 4, and it's too early to have seen any trends at this point. However, you can find kindergarten registration information on the website at <https://www.hilliardschools.org/kindergarten-registration-for-2022-2023/>.

G3 Policies submitted for a first reading

- a. IKF – Graduation Requirements

G4 Superintendent's Update

- a. COVID-19 Update

As has been pointed out, the omicron variant is having an impact. So bear with me; I believe I have a positive end to my report.

In tracking cases (as a combined number of staff and students) for this school year, our lowest number of weekly cases was for the week of October 11, with 30 total cases. The week of November 29th was an anomaly, with 113 cases. A typical week was in the mid-forties to fifty cases. For the week of January 3, we had 587 cases. As you can see, we are seeing a sharp increase in the number of cases. The number of cases reported today was 180, which is significantly higher.

There are many different pieces of information we look at in terms of how this affects us operationally. For example, at the beginning of last week, we had approximately 115 teachers absent, with 25 unable to be filled with a substitute teacher. Later in the week, we were up to about 140 teachers out per day, with 35 unfilled. Today we had 185 teachers out with 55 unfilled.

The impact of bus drivers being out really depends on the day. We do different things on different days, which means we have different numbers of drivers available. For a working number, at seventeen drivers out, things start to get a little dicey, and we'll need to make some adjustments. At the beginning of last week, we had seven drivers out. By mid-week, it was ten drivers out and 16 drivers out on Friday. Today, we did have seventeen drivers out. We will be watching this number very carefully. We are pretty lucky that once we hit that seventeen and start to see impact, we may only need to shorten the high school day (at the end of the day), giving our drivers time to complete the elementary routes. When you compare us to other school districts, we have been fortunate to keep our kids in school for as long as we have without any major impact.

Our normal daily attendance rate is about 93% in terms of students. On Friday, we were at 86%, roughly 2,300 students. These absences are not necessarily all COVID-related.

Another issue to consider is the number of medical staff out sick. One day last week, we had eleven medical staff out, making it very difficult to serve all of our students with medical needs such as medication needed during the school day. In addition, we have six of our fourteen elementary principals out sick with personal or family illnesses tomorrow.

Clearly, the spike in cases is having an impact, but our goal is to keep kids in school every day. There are resources at our disposal that we have not yet fully implemented. For example, everybody who works at the central office, eligible to teach in a classroom, has been notified to check their email by 7:00 a.m. every morning to see if they have been assigned to a school or classroom. So far, we've only had to do this in small numbers. In addition, we have shut down all non-contractual professional development to keep more teachers in classrooms. This is not a good thing in the long-term, but it will help us keep staff in classrooms during this surge in cases and absences.

You never know when you might reach a threshold in an individual or multiple buildings, but our principals and teachers are doing an unbelievable job. They understand the situation and are finding creative ways to make it work. We hope this current challenging situation is short-lived. We have to review and make decisions on a day-to-day basis. We can't know if or when we may reach or exceed our capacity limit.

Mr. Perry thanked Mr. Stewart for all of the information. We've not considered some of those points when discussing the number of cases and mortalities. If anyone is out of a building for any illness, it can create an issue with our staffing. I was supposed to meet with a principal the other day, but the meeting was canceled because the principal had COVID.

Mr. Perry asked what is our recourse if we happen to have a high number of absences in one or more buildings? Mr. Stewart replied that it depends on timing. Let's say we woke up today and found out that a large number of staff in a particular building called off overnight. We would treat that first day as a calamity day. School would be canceled for that building. If we had to extend the shut down into day two, we would be ready to teach remotely. We have already asked teachers to prepare for such an event. We are working on an informational letter to send to parents to update them on our plans. Like we do each winter, it will include a reminder to parents about being prepared for a possible calamity day.

Mr. Perry apologized for being a little lost in thought...I lost a cousin back in the late fall, and the discussion about hospital capacities brought her to mind. She did not pass from COVID. She had a heart condition that was discovered during a miscarriage. She was supposed to go to the Cleveland Clinic, but they were full due to the high number of COVID patients. She was life-flighted to Pittsburg, losing a couple of hours of possible life-saving care. Unfortunately, she passed away. Due to my faith, I'm not a very emotional person about death. But, she has two kids who no longer have their mother. I'm trying to say everyone should be careful and understand your decisions have an impact beyond your own safety. Thank you for having a broad perspective and considering many factors when making decisions for students. We all take this issue very seriously and wrestle with these decisions and their impact on our community. Your faith in us means a lot.

Mr. Perry complimented the instructors on their mock ethics bowl. It was impressive how the students thought critically, listened to each other, and were respectful in presenting their opinions and facts.

Mrs. Crowley added her thanks to teachers and staff for everything you are doing. We know it's not easy.

Mrs. Murdoch stated that she appreciates everything everyone has come out with over the past several days with creative thinking and problem-solving to keep our kids in school. None of us want to go back to the remote learning of 2020.

Mr. Vorst asked for clarification on the possibility of closing a building or classroom. Is it a building-to-building decision rather than a district decision? Do you ever consider just a classroom closure? Mr. Stewart responded that we had quarantined entire classrooms in the past, but with the current quarantine guidelines, we would most likely make a “building” decision versus a “classroom” decision. The metric would be our ability to operate safely, ensuring we have enough adults in the building.

If you were to close a building, would those staffs be deployed to other buildings to help cover absences? Mr. Stewart replied that any substitutes scheduled for the closed building would be sent to cover other openings in other buildings. In addition, we would work with the regular building teachers during that closed day to prepare for the possible remote learning if needed.

Mr. Vorst stated that although people may hear on the news about other districts closing, our goal is to do as minimal a closure as possible. Mr. Stewart replied that his goal is not to close unless necessary. We would close only the affected building or buildings rather than the entire district if possible. We also hope that it would be a short-term situation if it becomes necessary to close a building. Our goal is to get students back into the building as soon as possible. It is a day-by-day issue.

Mrs. Crowley commented that Columbus City Schools seemed to shut down building-by-building based on teacher shortages, but their district shut down was based on transportation. So, if we were in a transportation shortage, what would be our plan? Mr. Stewart responded that we would keep our doors open and understand that some students would be unable to get to school. However, if the transportation shortage stretches into multiple days, we would have to consider other possible contingency plans. For example, our teachers cannot teach both in-person and remotely. So if a significant number of kids can’t attend for an extended period, we might have to make a change.

H EXECUTIVE SESSION / ADJOURNMENT

H1 The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.