

SPRING LAKE BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

The Spring Lake Board of Education held a Special Meeting on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 via electronic video conferencing using Zoom Webinar, Webinar ID: 865 9900 2202, as permitted by Executive Order 2020-129 and due to the COVID-19 emergency. Jennifer Nicles called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Board members present: Jennifer Nicles, Curt Theune, Bruce Callen, Dennis Devlin, Kathy Breen, Katie Pigott and Jeff Lauinger. Absent: None

Remote meeting protocol was given by Superintendent Furton.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Katie Bator, 13709 Cypress, SL, inquired if the recent parent survey results will be shared.

Kelly Graftema, no address provided, expressed her desire that the Board stick with their decision for full in-person learning beginning September 14.

DISCUSSION ITEM

SLPS RETURN TO LEARNING PLAN

Dennis Furton provided the reason and purpose of this meeting. He advised if the Board is to make a change from the previous decision of moving to fulltime in-person learning on September 14, a Board member would need to make a motion for same and another member would need to support it, then a vote of the Board would take place.

Mr. Furton provided his recommendation, with his reasoning behind it, that the District continue with the plan the Board previously approved and move forward with fulltime in-person learning on September 14.

Mr. Furton provided the Board with updated student quarantine and positive case information and indicated the Dashboard will be updated weekly with this information and posted on the SLPS website. He also provided the parent survey results, broken down by grade, that showed out of 2,199 responses, 73% in grades K-4, 71% in grades 5-6, 59% in grades 7-8 and 56% in grades 9-12 prefer fulltime in-person learning over the hybrid learning option. The staff survey results indicated that 61% of all staff preferred the hybrid option with 39% electing fulltime in-person instruction.

Board member Katie Pigott noted that the parent survey did not include parents who opted for distance learning and thinks it would be appropriate to include them in future surveys and to keep them in the loop with all information being provided to in-person learning families.

Board member Jennifer Nicles asked Mr. Furton to summarize the safety precautions being taken and he advised the following:

- Masks are worn by all students and staff throughout the day, with appropriate breaks for students, including breaks during recess
- Plexiglas dividers have been made available or will be available by the end of September in all buildings
- Hand sanitizing stations are available throughout all buildings

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- Limitations on the number of students in the restrooms at one time
- One-way walking routes in all hallways
- No locker usage
- Educating students on hygiene techniques and how to mitigate the spread of germs
- More freedom for students to spread out during lunchtime
- Masks worn by all on buses
- Assigned seating on buses
- Hand sanitizing required on buses
- All buses cleaned and disinfected between runs

Board member Curt Theune provided that he is in favor of continuing the plan that the Board implemented providing for fulltime in-person learning.

Board member Kathy Breen also provided her support for continuing with the plan. She urged families to monitor kids closely and err on the side of caution before sending them to school if any sign of illness.

Board member Jennifer Nicles provided that she is in favor of continuing the plan. She indicated she has heard from parents with concerns over the block schedule and would like discussion of same.

Mr. Furton advised that principals and return to learn planning teams will look at the block schedule and consider what options are available. He indicated the reason for the block schedule was for ease of contact tracing as provided by the Board at a previous meeting.

Board member Katie Pigott provided that she would rather see hybrid learning continue for a little while longer and take a slower path to fulltime in-person learning and provided her reasoning behind that. She indicated she realizes the impact of this on working families and would like to begin a conversation about offering those families some solutions.

Mr. Furton indicated he would put some work into a concrete plan over the next week to week and a half for working families should the district need to revert back to remote learning or another hybrid plan.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Joanne Koratich, 6789 Bridlepath D., SL, advised that while she supports students returning fulltime, she has strong concerns over the block schedule and the amount of time students would be in one class.

Amy Kelly, no address provided, asked if the district continues with the hybrid plan, to have more consistency with student days with each groups attending two or more days in a row.

Jessie VanDonkelaar, no address provided, asked for clarification if no motion from the Board would students return fulltime on September 14. She also provided her concerns with the block schedule and length of time students would be in a class.

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Aaron King, no address provided, thanked the Board for all they are doing and stated his preference for students to attend two days in a row, or a week on and a week off, if a hybrid plan were to continue. He also stated his belief of the importance of student physicals and inquired why they are not being done this year.

Deb Burkhardt, no address provided, thanked the Board and stated that her 3 children are not enjoying school, expressed concern over quarantine numbers at the high school, and if the Board would consider a hybrid option for just the high school with elementary moving to fulltime.

Kelly and Eric Larson, 19373 Rosemary Rd, SL, provided their senior daughter used to hate school but is now very grateful to be in class, expressed appreciation for the thoughtfulness and time the Board has taken on these decisions, and indicated that life is all about tradeoffs – one being dealing with a block schedule in order to have the students return to fulltime in-person learning.

Kari Brecht, no address provided, asked Mr. Furton how he felt the first 3 weeks have gone.

Kelly Goetzinger, 16698 152nd Ave, SL, advised she elected the virtual option for her 4th grade student and indicated it has been a wonderful experience thus far. She also asked to be included on all parent emails from the district, even if it does not pertain to students participating in online learning.

Lindsay Allard, no address provided, stated that her two students are not really enjoying the school year based on the classes not mixing and are feeling the loss of friendships because schedules are different with the hybrid plan.

Board member Jennifer Nicles thanked the staff for all that they have done and indicated none of these decisions are easy, and that while cohorting and block schedules are not optimal, it does provide for better contact tracing and feels that moving forward as planned is the best plan for the district to succeed.

ADJOURNMENT

Curt Theune moved, supported by Jeff Lauinger, to adjourn the meeting.

Vote: Yes – Unanimous

Jennifer Nicles adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

APPROVED:

_____ Date

_____ Board Secretary