

Oyster River Cooperative School District
March 24, 2021 WORKSHOP MEETING

School Board Present: Al Howland, Tom Newkirk, Yusi Turell, Michael Williams, Dan Klein, Denise Day.

Student Representative: Megan Deane **Absent:** Brian Cisneros

Administrators Present: Todd Allen, Dr. James Morse, Misty Lowe, Suzanne Filippone, Jay Richard, David Goldsmith

Staff Present: Catherine Plourde, Janet Martel

Guest Present:

Called to Order at 6:59 PM by Superintendent Dr. James Morse

Dr. Morse started by thanking teachers for being in attendance, as well as thanking Todd Allen and Catherine Plourde for their work with Strafford County Board of Health in the execution of the vaccination drive earlier in the day.

All-in Model: Start Date of May 3

Dr. Morse discussed his goals (outlined in Guiding Thoughts & Questions) with the return of staff and students to All-in Model.

Dr. Morse also referenced the survey sent to gauge parental interest in sending their students back to school full time, which shows high interest across all schools in the district. Many remote parents expressed concern that their student may change teachers when returning to physical attendance, and remote teachers want to keep those students in their classrooms upon return. The challenges faced would be uneven distribution of student population in classrooms impacting social distancing. With the anticipated CDC change of social distancing recommendations from 6 feet to 3 feet, the high school will be able to accommodate students, however, the middle school and elementary schools will be slightly more difficult. It has been determined that the wearing of masks by students and staff will remain in place for the foreseeable future, and the handwashing stations will remain in place as well.

Dr. Morse (referencing survey) Half the middle school parents want their student to ride the bus, bringing forth the challenge of accommodating the students with the lack of drivers in the district. One proposed solution would be to start the high school and middle school earlier, giving an extra hour for runs for only elementary school students. This proposed solution would only be in place for the spring, with a long-term solution to follow for the 2021-2022 school year.

In regard to current guidelines: Band / chorus will maintain their current requirements of 8 – 10 feet distance, meeting in small ensembles or online, not full performances in-person

Issues that may face World Language / MS Electives: Classes are comprised of different grade levels, do we allow students to travel from class to class, or should these courses be completed on their laptops?

Todd Allan moved discussion toward current COVID-19 data in the area.

Currently Durham is the only town in the District large enough to have COVID-19 numbers monitored, however data also includes students from UNH. When looking specifically at the data from the University, the number of cases in Durham that are unaffiliated with the University becomes very low. Question arose if it is possible to interpret the numbers independent from UNH data.

Dr. Morse called for questions that attendees may have.

Denise Day: How many responses did we receive to each survey?

Suzanne Filippone: As of 11 am today (3/24) 653 of 834 surveys were completed (78%). Results show that 77% of students surveyed want to return to school, 23% want to stay home/remote.

Megan Deane: Students have until tonight to complete survey; current results show 551 surveys completed with 70%+ students wanting to return in-person.

Suzanne Filippone (in regard to transportation questions on survey): More students now want to drive to school than there is parking available, a solution will need to be found for that.

Yusi Turell: Do we have this information available by grade?

Suzanne Filippone: In raw data, yes, but not currently presentable.

Megan Deane offered to share the data she had regarding the student surveys, which included percentages by grade.

Megan Deane: Students have until the end of tonight (5/24) to complete, but current data is from 551 student responses. Noted that 530+ students want to keep Wednesdays as a learning day.

- Ninth graders biggest concerns were safety, ability to social distance during classes and lunch
- Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth graders expressed concerns mostly over social distancing while at school and during lunch, worry about workload teachers may impose to catch them up to speed by the end of the year
- Most students are missing the social interactions they get at school, both with friends and teachers

Misty Lowe (sharing survey results from Mast Way families): 90%+ families responded, 80% of families are in favor of students returning to school, 20% are against. Most families are willing to do what their teachers do. If the teachers stays remote, so will the student; however if the teacher is no longer teaching remote, the family will send student to school to keep them with the teacher

David Goldsmith (sharing Moharimet survey results): 268 of 288 surveys were completed. 200+ families would like to see students back in schools. Across elementary schools, 66% of students would be taking the bus, creating a transportation issue.

Jay Richard (sharing survey results from Middle school): 653 responses to survey, 90% families want students to return to school; Roughly 50% of students returning would be taking the bus to school.

Todd Allen: With this data, the high school seems to be at a higher risk than the other schools.

Catherine Plourde: If the numbers rise, the high school can stay at a 6 foot distance or they can return to remote learning

Megan Deane: If K-8 returns full-time, is it possible for high school to stay 50/50 due to cohorting?

Dr. Morse: The school Board can use the numbers to determine the models.

Dan Klein: Can we move to separate UNH data from Durham data?

Todd Allen: The struggle is determining the data with such small numbers without seeing peoples' identifying information.

Catherine Plourde: UNH data is really high when compared to Town of Durham data. A lot of reported data is waiting on approval to be shared with public, but we know there have been very few cases (of COVID-19) transmitted directly inside of our school district.

Janet Martel: We really need to tease out the numbers from UNH. How are students going to be impacted by being assigned new teachers when they return to school? How do we enforce and practice the 6 feet/3 feet social distancing rules if students are face-to-face?

Denise Day: Do teachers want to maintain their Wednesday schedules?

Janet Martel: If we move schedule to five sections, something will need to be removed. All students learn differently and if they fear they are behind, the Wednesday schedules are important.

Denise Day: What will that look like?

Dr. Morse: Different levels use them for different purposes.

Suzanne Filippone: Wednesdays are currently used for relearning and reassessment, and support for students.

Todd Allen: Will a Wednesday flex be better for teachers?

Suzanne Filippone: Teachers feel the Wednesdays will be important.

Misty Lowe: We've only talked about an all-in 5 day schedule.

David Goldsmith: Wednesdays will provide teachers with more time to meet.

Jay Richard: Some teams are all-in, some have more remote students, some need 4 sections, some could have five sections

Denise Day: Would Wednesdays work?

Jay Richard: We need to talk to special education on the impact it would have on their students.

Catherine Plourde: Wednesdays have been very beneficial for students.

Janet Martel: Every room in the school is being used Wednesdays, sometimes 8-10 kids per room.

Dr. Morse: The middle school can have 200 kids on Wednesdays. Remote students took a big hit in interaction with teachers.

Michael Williams: When discussing 3 feet student distancing versus 6 feet distancing for adults, does that change for adults with vaccinations?

Catherine Plourde: Not enough reported information to determine if vaccinated adults can't spread it. We need to look out for the entire community, not just our students.

Michael Williams: After our meeting tonight, have Dr. Morse's goals changed in priority?

Al Howland: A real focus should be helping kids enjoy learning again, not 100% meeting competencies.

Todd Allen: We can only guide them; kids are the experts.

Denise Day: Use this as a moving forward period, not a catching up period.

David Goldsmith: We talk about usually in the fall getting kids adjusted. We need to re-teach them the environment of school as a focus while teaching them the content.

Jay Richard: We've been talking about moving the teams together to the next grade.

Janet Martel: Teachers are stressed that parents are going to worry and put pressure on them. The district putting out the expectations to parents will greatly help relieve that sense of stress.

Yusi Turell: How are AP classes impacted, as far as meeting standards?

Suzanne Filippone: There is some pressure for the kids, so the exams are being spread out. Parents and students are made aware of the fast pace and expectations when these classes start.

Dr. Morse: We need to make it very clear to parents why we are doing what we are doing.

Dan Klein: We should articulate we are doing this because CDC guidelines have changed and because teachers are getting vaccinated.

Michael Williams: What if the high school goes remote again?

Suzanne Filippone: A lot of concerns with that. Kids are struggling with the 50% model; counselors are really busy working with them. This is a big change and we need to have the mental health resources ready for teachers and students.

Dr. Morse: {Teacher from Spaulding High School} told the board how every time the students went remote and came back it was like they were starting all over again.

Denise Day: With the amount of high school cohorts, is it more beneficial to keep the high school at a 50/50 model?

Suzanne Filippone: If we keep the current model, we could have more families willing to come back.

David Goldsmith: If we do the all-in model, then students will need to change teachers. The class sizes will become uneven between remote and in-person. If parents want their student to stay with their teacher, it becomes too hard.

Misty Lowe: Some grades have so many remote students that now want to come in and it will result in many moves.

Denise Day: Can we survey remote families to see which is more important: Students keeping the same teacher or students returning to school?

Misty Lowe: We have the data in emails from parents themselves.

David Goldsmith: Once we have a model to share with them, we can ask the question again if their student will be in, or out, or if they will do whatever their teacher is doing.

Dr. Morse: There is a chance of a relatively small number of students that will be impacted at the elementary level.

David Goldsmith: We'll never be able to make every family happy. Every student that has transitioned has been successful, and they have changed teachers. If the thoughts at home are more positive, then the transition is easier for the student.

Denise Day: How many families are okay staying remote for the remaining 6 weeks?

Dr. Morse: A lot of people will be upset because it is an expectation for us to return.

Michael Williams: There is a lot of value in keeping Wednesday flexible if it is giving students more opportunities.

Al Howland: What's the most effective use of time? The schedule should build itself out from there, but the justification should come from teachers and administration.

Megan Deane: At the high school, students use Wednesdays more for the extra curriculars than office hours. It's not 100% academic, but still related to school, and is good socially and emotionally for students.

Dan Klein: We should build out an additional model to show both to families why we picked all-in and how it is helping with our goals.

Michael Williams: We are 30-50% above the threshold for 6 feet spacing at the high school, may not be at that point by April 7. How do we set an objective measure? How do we see that landscape?

Todd Allen: We've never been there. We need a better understanding of the metric itself in order to make that determination.

Al Howland: It's very likely the high school will not be able to adopt this model.

Dan Klein: Can we get nurses and the epidemiologist to come up with a proposal, or some advice?

Dr. Morse: They will give a subjective opinion, due to lack of data.

Michael Williams: Next steps decision will be made April 7

Janet Martel: If we don't have a decision soon, teachers won't have enough time to plan and move students for the return.

Dr. Morse: We need to draft a model by then and put the ideas into a model. We have a lot of work to do. We want time to get feedback from teachers too. In regard to Wednesday, we need to figure out the buses, be transparent with parents that they will be full.

Michael Williams: Will we be sending out surveys?

Dr. Morse: No surveys right now, we need a model first.

Michael Williams requesting to stream next week's workshop.

Janet Martel: We (Teachers' Union) need a meeting too, before a model is adopted

Al Howland: Can we have a meeting before April 7?

Janet Martel: Yes.

Dr. Morse closed by thanking attendees for their guidance and input into the conversation.

Workshop adjourned 9:31 pm.