

Oyster River Cooperative School District

Regular Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2020

DRAFT

SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT: Dan Klein, Tom Newkirk, Denise Day, Michael Williams, Al Howland, Yusi Turell. Brian Cisneros arrived at 7:38 PM **Student Representative:** Megan Deane

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: James Morse, Todd Allen, Sue Caswell, Suzanne Filippone, Misty Lowe, David Goldsmith, Catherine Plourde, Jay Richard, Bill Sullivan

STAFF PRESENT: Kim Felch, Josh Olstad

GUEST PRESENT: There were 14 members in the audience.

CALLED TO ORDER at 7:00 PM by Tom Newkirk

Tom Newkirk moved to the approval of the agenda as written.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Denise Day moved to approve the agenda as written, 2nd by Yusi Turell. Motion passed with a vote of 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

At this time Tom introduced public comment and as there were only six, each would be allotted 3 minutes.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Erin Bobo-Caron has two sons an eighth grader, and a tenth grader and she is also a teacher in the District. She stated that the live lesson with interactions with teachers and fellow students provides a meaningful connection. Asynchronous learning is equal to disengagement and disconnection with trouble staying focused. In terms of concurrent learning she asked the Board to think about the philosophy.

Olivia Gass is a junior at the high school and listened in on the student senate meeting with the Board which prompted her to attend and represent her peers. She did a quick poll asking student which they preferred, remote or in-person, which resulted in nineteen students preferring remote and 62 students preferring in-person or 77% in-person to 23% remote. She also reviewed comments that the students made.

Saskia Hirz, is a Durham parent who has two children in the high school. She expressed her incredible frustration for no plan being sent out for the students return to in-person and asked what the criteria is to return to school as these kids need to be back.

Brook Keeler has two daughters and lives in Durham. She stated that it was not the Boards job to protect us. She listened at the Barrington meeting and is disappointed with the Board and felt they took a defensive stance. Would like to see a weighted spread sheet ranking the level of importance to getting back to school. She asked what the launch plan was, and to make it public, and asked if all were vaccinated could we go back to school.

Chad Michaud has a ninth grader from Barrington who stated that the asynchronous model made a huge difference with his son's attitude. He is now very upbeat, organized and the social interaction was positive. He did state that when viewing his son's computer screen there were black boxes where cameras were not turned on. He tells his son to put the camera on to make a connection with his teacher.

Matt Pappas is here tonight wearing three hats, a parent, a teacher at OR, and a Rochester Board member. Speaking for myself the time for in-person learning was September/October when the case numbers were low. Don't change now as we are settling into a routine. Sending students back now is unconscionable. We are in an epic pandemic and have experienced firsthand a quarantine situation right here at the high school. We all want to return to school, remove the politics from the discussion. Now is not the time to meet in large groups.

Michelle Dunbar has a son at St. Thomas, and they are doing an excellent job on school, all cases are outside the school setting. Remote Learning is killing our students. She is here tonight representing parents and students with a call to action, please do not give up. Stop giving money to the PTO, write to individual Board members and ask for their resignation, generate a Go Fund Me page for legal representation, we will not be held captive. She stated that she knows there are teachers out there who agree, don't stay silent, don't hide under the union. Make a motion for teachers to enter the school buildings and teach remotely from their classrooms now.

Justin Disco has a junior at the high school and also is a teacher at Spaulding High School. He stated that OR missed the boat and should have gone back in September when it is the crucial time to make the initial connection. He bought a home in this district and is ashamed to be here, this Board is inactive. Make a plan and evaluate every thirty days.

There were no additional public comments and it finished at 7:15 PM.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion to approve the December 2, 2020 regular meeting minutes:

Revisions:

Denise Day stated on page 5 in the third paragraph for her comment she would like it to read, "Denise Day expressed her frustration that the updated information from the finance committee was not sent out prior to the meeting so that there would be time to review it."

Denise Day moved to approve the December 2, 2020 regular meeting minutes as revised, 2nd by Michael Williams. Motion passed with a vote of 6-0. Student Representative voting in the affirmative.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS:

A. District: None

B. Board:

Denise thanked Megan and the student senate for their meeting today. It was extremely informative. She also clarified a statement that she made to a group of parents that the kids are going to be okay, we need to give them hope and that she is not minimizing the impact of Covid. She wants to reassure our kids to have faith and that we will be with them every step of the way.

VI. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve the agenda items listed under the unanimous consent agenda:

Al Howland read the motion for unanimous consent agenda. Motion to approve the list of policies for second read/adoption and deletion. Second Read/Adoption: GCQC-Resignation/Retirement, GCP – Staff Vacancies, GDR – Work Rules for Staff GCRD – Tutoring for Pay. For Deletion: GCKA-Overnight Program Implementation, GCN/AFC – Evaluation of Professional Staff – Teachers, GDPC/GCPC – Retirement, GCQB – Publication of Creation of Educational Material, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed with a vote of 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

VII. DISTRICT REPORTS:

A. Assistant Superintendent Reports: None

B. Superintendent's Report:

Dover Medical Advisory Council Questions and Answers {7:30 PM}

Dr Morse began by giving a brief description of the work that the Dover School District did to create the Chart that is included in your Board back up. He also stated that the questions generated by the Board that were previously sent to the Dover Medical Counsel representative are enclosed in the back up and listed below. He asked the Dover Medical Representatives to introduce themselves.

Megan W. Harvey's has a doctoral degree in epidemiology and public health. She interprets data surrounding infectious diseases and has been assisting various school districts with the COVID pandemic.

Scott Schuler, SPHN/SCPHN COVID-19 Incident Management Team – An Incident Commander that has been responding to the COVID situation since March.

Both Megan and Scott read the individual questions and provided answers to the best of their ability.

There were technical difficulties at various times, but they were able to answer or repeat answers to the satisfaction of the Board.

The question and answer session concluded at 8:10 PM with Superintendent Morse thanking both Megan and Scott for the participation and apologized for the technical difficulties that occurred during the session.

Questions presented at the Presentation.

COVID Related Questions for December 16 Board Meeting

Mental Health

1. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that schools should allow children to be "physically present in school" as much as possible because of major health, social and educational risks to keeping children at home. What evidence is there of an actual increase in youth mental health and social challenges during the pandemic?
2. Considering the restrictions and stress of in-school instruction, are there solid data to show that kids are happier once they can go to school through a hybrid model?

3. From a health perspective, how should districts weigh COVID-19 risks vs. mental health risks in their reopening strategy?

Vaccines

4. How do you envision the timeline for vaccinations--both for teachers and students? Is it realistic to imagine universal vaccination before the start of the 2021-2 school year?
5. When can we expect our teachers and staff to be able to access a vaccine?
6. What is the process and anticipated timelines for making these vaccines available for children? Is Sept. 2021 a reasonable hope?
7. In the months when an adult vaccine is available, but a youth vaccine is not, how should we think about the increased safety of our schools? E.g., could we increase student density?
8. What would be the process, if any, for mandating that teachers and staff get vaccinated? (If mandating is legal, is it a state or district decision? What issues, if any, should we anticipate towards ensuring our full school community is vaccinated?)

Modes of transmission

9. Early in the year it was thought that young children are less vulnerable to Covid 19 and less likely to spread it than older students. Is that still the accepted view of professionals?
10. What do we know about children's susceptibility to COVID-19 and their contagiousness to others? Does this vary by age?
11. Are schools "spreader sites" when they follow protocol? (How is asymptomatic spread tracked in school if there is no testing? And if there is no testing, how do we know for sure that schools are not contributing to community spread? We know there have been instances of Covid-19 in schools that offer full time instruction with both masks, social distancing, and updated ventilation - St. Thomas Aquinas is the most recent example.)

Testing & Contact Tracing

12. What changes in testing do you foresee in the months after the new year?
13. What are current options for inexpensive, reliable, available testing?
14. Are there any promising technologies on the horizon that a school district might access? (To your knowledge, are any other districts (nationally) testing teachers and/or students regularly; if so, how do they do it?)
15. How do you recommend defining contacts for purposes of contact tracing? Would it be prudent to contact trace with a lower threshold than DHHS has been using, for example within 6 feet for any length of time, or in the same classroom for more than 20 minutes regardless of proximity?

School operating modes and metrics

16. In planning for a return to in-person schooling at some point after the new year (2021), how useful and credible is the rubric developed by the Dover Public Schools, created by Megan Harvey?
17. When considering community prevalence and new cases, do you recommend considering only the school district (i.e. just Dover, or just Durham+Lee+Madbury in Oyster River's case), or a larger region such as adjoining towns, the county, or state? It looks like you use both the County and State numbers in the DSD Covid metric dashboard (<https://4.files.edl.io/5991/11/24/20/142030-fc0ba0cf-8b0d-4c2e-8c77-18d7d48101a3.pdf>). When they are different, do you place more weight on County or State rates?

18. Do you recommend different levels of In Person-Hybrid-Remote based on the ability to cohort or contact trace, or based on the size of cohorts? For example, would you recommend different models or precautions for high schools where there are more students and staff mixing, than middle or elementary schools where the groups interacting can be kept small even within the school?
19. When NH schools were closed in March, the apparent rate of spread of Covid-19 was significantly less than it is now. Scientifically, using current data, why is opening schools now considered safer than it was in March?
20. Opening during a surge: ORCSD currently operates our elementary schools in a hybrid model and our middle and high schools in a primarily remote model. From a health perspective - If COVID-19 community rates continue to rise into January and February and our elementary schools continue in hybrid format, is it feasible/advisable to open a NEW school (e.g., the middle school) to hybrid format? Why or why not?

Environmental Considerations

21. What are current best practice safety protocols in schools (such as Dover?) and how were those reached? What data guided these decisions?
22. What safety measures do you recommend for use of school busses?
23. What are the best practices for room ventilation? Should windows be open or closed? Should fans be used? Do you recommend use of standalone HEPA or similar filtration in classrooms?
24. How much is the length of a school day a concern? Would you be more concerned about transmission risk in a full day of school as opposed to a half day of school?

Jim continued his report out to the Board by explaining his request to move to Remote Learning beginning Monday, December 21st and Tuesday, December 22nd and running through the holiday/vacation weeks and continuing into the first week of January with a return of Monday, January 11th. He went on to explain that this would provide a lengthen timeframe to create a buffer between the holidays and remote school days to help lower the spread of the virus in our schools when we return.

The Board asked if this would include all district activities, clubs and sports and also provided a clarification of the return date to school as one week.

There was no further discussion and the meeting moved forward with Suzanne being invited up to the podium to present her presentation. Jim explained to the Board that instead of the high school and middle school presenting their power points, they would report out using an executive summary with the power point being provided as back up.

Suzanne began by referring to the letter received from the NEAS&C for the high school's continued school accreditation and also referred to the letter that the high school counseling department submitted the RAMP application (Recognized ASCA Model Program) for implementation of a fully comprehensive school counseling program at ORHS.

Suzanne reported out the following to the Board.

High School Faculty were asked what they were currently observing as academic and social emotional challenges for the 9th grade. The faculty identified that the 9th grade was challenged with motivation and executive functioning as well as communication and self-advocacy.

The students were also surveyed earlier this year. 176 of the 210 9th graders completed the survey. 13% stated that they were not motivated and 60% felt their motivation was neutral.

We are living during a time of a global pandemic. Research and reality are evident in many of our lives - during a time of trauma our crisis memory, motivation, and task completion are dramatically impacted.

Having said that, as we compiled the data collected about student strengths and faculty responses I was and am thoroughly impressed by our faculty and students.

High School Faculty were asked what they were currently observing as academic and social emotional strengths for the 9th grade. The faculty identified that the 9th grade strengths as attendance, seeking help, resilience, adaptability, and kindness. These skills are vital in development and are not measured on a test or in a paper. These are vital lifelong skills that are highlighted as things we as a school value in our Vision of a Graduate.

Faculty were also asked about the ways in which they are adapting to meet the needs of our students. I am continually impressed by the ways in which our faculty have and continue to adapt. They have identified the following areas as ways in which they have adapted to meet the needs of our students:

Increased time spent with students individually – one on one time
Refined Curriculum Content & Pace
Increased Parent Communication and meetings
Adjustment of Assignments/Flexibility of Due Dates
Referrals to Counselor

These adjustments have resulted in consistent grade comparisons for the past four years. If teachers were not adjusting accordingly and appropriately you would see a larger number of students failing, then in previous years. Our faculty and staff are working extremely hard to ensure that all student needs are being met and they are doing an amazing job.

I have been asked to discuss next steps for the high school.

I am working on a 50% model that respects all learners, remote and in person as well as supporting faculty with the new demands that a new model would impose. It is important to remember that any 50% model will result in the loss of contact time with teachers and instructional time. If you decide that you would like to pursue the 50% model at the high school I would ask the School Board to allow me the appropriate time to ensure that this shift is done so with proper attention to detail.

Al Howland asked that four questions be answered to move forward with a plan:

1. What public health criteria are we looking at?
2. What is the best model as developed with staff input and why?

3. What are the limitations on the suggested model?
4. Budget?

The Board asked various clarifying questions about staff availability, flexibility of switching classes, responsibility of determining criteria, concerns about taking time away from teachers, communication being a problem and that we need a plan, questions regarding the criteria, in -person balance vs. remote.

Jim advised the Board to allow Suzanne to build the model and present at the January 6th meeting at which time the Board can review using the criteria that is determined and ask clarifying questions.

There was no further discussion and Tom asked the Student Senate to report out.

Megan reported out on the meeting that was held that morning between the student senate and the School Board via Teams. She stated that it went very well with discussion between both parties with a question and answer session. She also relayed that many students expressed a lack of interest in coming in due to the risk. She would like to have another scheduled meeting with students to discuss the proposed model. She also discussed the students view of asynchronous vs. synchronous. Moving forward she hopes to have a safe plan we can implement that can be shared.

Tom called a 5-minute recess at 9:10 PM.

The meeting resumed at 9:15 PM with the middle school presentation by Jay Richard.

Jim explained as with the high school presentation, he provided an executive summary to report out with the power point being provided in the back up. His summary is depicted below.

ORMS has created a hybrid school model which will increase in-person learning. This was approved by the ORCSD school board to start after the MLK holiday or as COVID numbers allow.

Review Option 2 ORMS hybrid model:

Students will come into the building, by last name, one full day a week

Students will have one asynchronous day and two synchronous remote learning days

Students identified through the MTSS process will continue with targeted learning Wednesdays

Benefits of option 2 hybrid model:

Increase in-person learning – 25% of students in the building at a time

No student or teacher team changes

No case manager changes

Schedule is designed to easily switch to and from the current remote schedule

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Challenges of option 2 hybrid model:

Increase in Asynchronous time

Increase in personnel (4 paraprofessionals needed to cover remote teacher classrooms)

Transition time between current model and new model (hiring staff, parent survey to confirm choice, adapting to new schedule)

Timeline:

Week of Jan. 4-8

Survey parents, survey will be due Friday, January 8

Microsoft LIVE parent Q&A meeting Tuesday, January 5 at 7 PM (recorded for those who can't attend)

Create and share a family newsletter regarding new model and schedule

Week of Jan. 11-15

Transportation planning

New paraprofessional training

District nutrition/lunch planning

Week of Jan. 19-22

Confirm transportation and bus routes

Teachers and staff prepare classrooms for safety

COVID safety plan established (arrival, dismissal, lunch, etc.)

Week of Jan. 26-29

Board green lights plan January 20

New Hybrid Model starts Quarter 3 on January 26

A lengthy discussion ensued, and the Board asked Jay clarifying questions, which he answered.

Yusi said it's important to make clear in our communications to families that, even though they will be asked to answer the survey in January, we are not talking about definitely returning in person on January 26th. Todd and Jay confirmed that we are preemptively reassigning students' sections at the start of Q3, to make it easier to switch to in-person instruction when the Board decides to. Michael and Al emphasized that parents should know what the criteria are for returning to school in-person before they complete the survey.

Al Howland made a motion to move forward with the new hybrid model for grades 6 through 8 and the 5th grade will remain the same, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

C. Finance Committee Update:

Al Howland reported that the Finance committee charge was for the budget of the 2021-22 school year. He would like to come back to the Board on January 6th with a new charge that would include any departments that would allow for wiggle room for additional expenses incurring during this school year.

Denise Day clarified that in the original charge the sharing of documentation for these meetings would be provided to the full Board for their review and that did not happen at the November 24th meeting. She asked if minutes could be developed and provide to the full Board.

Al Howland apologized for that lapse and stated that it was a quickly called meeting and that it would not happen again.

D. Business Administrator:

FY21 Budget Update

Sue Caswell directed the Board to her report in the back up and explained that she encumbered funds for bond payments, utilities until the end of the year, and advised the Board that these were assumptions for what they thought would be the amount. She advised the Board of some accounts that might have balances.

There were no questions and the meeting moved to Discussion items.

D. Student Representative Report: was moved following the high school presentation on page 7.

~~**F. Other:**~~

VIII. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Draft 2021-22 School Calendar – 2nd Review

There was a brief discussion with no questions.

Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the 2021-22 School Calendar, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Consideration of concurrent learning model research and feasibility

Yusi presented her justification for creating this new working group and read her proposed motion:

Direct the administrative team to establish a working group to research other districts' experiences with concurrent teaching and to conduct a feasibility study for ORCSD - including technology platforms, instructional strategies, support for teachers and students, and possible models for voluntary implementation by individual teachers. The working group will present its findings to the Board on February 3, 2021. The Superintendent will invite the Guild to nominate members to the working group, which will also include parents, administration, and Board members.

Feedback from the Board was that this was a good idea and that it brings different ideas to the table, that there was concern that this would add a burden to the administrators, that the timeline depicted was ambitious, and that the make-up of the committee might be too large and suggestion of possibly lowering the number of representative needed.

Yusi Turell made a motion to direct the administrative team to establish a working group to research other districts' experiences with concurrent teaching and to conduct a feasibility study for ORCSD - including technology platforms, instructional strategies, support for teachers and students, and possible models for voluntary implementation by individual teachers. The working group will present its findings to the Board on February 3, 2021. The Superintendent will invite the Guild to nominate members to the working group, which will also include parents, administration, and Board members, 2nd by Dan Klein. Motion passed with a vote of 6-1 with Denise Day voting in the negative and with the student representative voting in the affirmative. The motion passes.

IX. ACTIONS

Superintendent Actions:

A. Board Action Items:

Discussion:

Approval of List of Coaches and Volunteers

Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the list of winter coaches and volunteers, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed with a vote of 5-0-2 with Michael Williams and Dan Klein abstaining and the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Michael Williams asked if there needed to be a vote to support the superintendent's request to move forward with the remote learning.

The Board questioned if this would be a clarification of the superintendent's decision and not a Board approval.

Denise Day made a motion to clarify the superintendent's decision to go remote from December 21st through January 8th, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

X. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES: None

A. Manifests Reviewed and Approved by Manifest Committee:

Denise Day and Dan Klein reviewed the manifests.

Payroll Manifest #

Vendor Manifest # 13 \$503,512.50

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Darren Skopel has a daughter who is a junior and he is a teacher at Spaulding. He sympathizes with the position that the Board is in and gave an example of his experience at Spaulding and encourage the Board to keep moving forward.

XII. CLOSING ACTIONS:

- A. Future Meeting Date: 12/30/20 Manifest Meeting – ORHS Auditorium
 1/6/21 Regular Meeting – ORHS Auditorium
 1/13/21 – Budget Public Hearing – HS Auditorium
 1/20/21 – Regular Meeting – ORHS Auditorium

~~**XIII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION RSA 91-A:3 {if needed}**~~

~~_____ **NON-MEETING SESSION: RSA 91-A:2 {if needed}**~~

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

Brian Cisneros made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 p.m., 2nd by Michael Williams. Motion passed with a vote of 7-0 with student representative voting in the affirmative.

Respectfully Submitted,
Wendy L. DiFruscio
Executive Assistant to Superintendent of Schools