

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION OF THE MARSHALL BOARD OF EDUCATION HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021 AT 7:00 PM IN-PERSON IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM AND VIRTUALLY @ [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCo\\_Dw2K8ptX5eFKauouPJZQ/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCo_Dw2K8ptX5eFKauouPJZQ/)

PRESENT: LINDSEY, NICHOLSON, MIDDLETON, M. DAVIS, GAMBLE, LANKERD, R. DAVIS, JONES

ABSENT: WILLIAMS

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by President Lindsey. A moment of silence was observed.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The pledge of allegiance was led by Vice President Nicholson.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Moved by Nicholson, supported by Middleton, that the agenda be approved as presented with Item 3 – District Highlight being postponed for a later date. A roll-call vote unanimously carried the motion.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

President Lindsey called for any members of the present and virtual audiences to address the Board on agenda items only.

Nick Dent, MTA Co-President read a statement created by MTA Leadership related to new protocols, student spacing, increase of in-person instruction under returning to learn, and the up-tick in positive COVID cases in Michigan. The MTA does not support the changes to spacing or the suggested increase of in-person instruction.

Shannon Robinson, MTA Vice President continued reading the MTA's statement sharing concerns of having enough certified staff and subs to accommodate the suggested increase of in-person instruction; the reworking of student schedules at the middle school; and the lack of response to emails sent to board members and central office administration. She added the MTA encourages meaningful dialogue with its leadership.

Joanna Johnson appreciates the comments made by the MTA. She stands by her comments made at a previous board meeting asking for transparency, specifically public access to the entire board packet contents.

Julieann Tobias, a math teacher at MHS presented questions for the board to think about: is this a wait and see approach; how many students will return; what accommodations will be made to safely distance students in the cafeteria; are students going to pick the type of learning they want; why is the current meeting not being held within three feet of each other; and what about accountability for students that are not attending school. She shared she has heard many reasons from students as to why they are not attending classes.

Dave Turner, MHS Principal indicated he does not support the change to four days of in-person instruction at the secondary level. It is not known how many students will come back for in-person instruction if four days a week is made available. Many parents have not responded to the survey. He asked if the district considered what has happened in the county with neighboring school districts that attempted to increase in-person instruction to find they had to return to their previous model of instruction due to the uptick in positive COVID cases in their schools. He believes the current model works and continuing with it will provide continuity for students.

Tara Egnatuk, MMS Principal acknowledged all the work that has gone into the school year and she understand the difficult decision the board is faced with. She shared positive result of middle school students demonstrated through recent testing that indicates students are progressing and showing great growth. A recent climate survey of students resulted in students liking the current schedule as there is less drama and more access to teachers. She cautioned that an increase of in-person instruction will result in student schedules having to be changed; teachers no longer having prep time; and anticipated issues with managing student distancing in the cafeteria.

Patty Hunt, a readiness kindergarten teacher at Harrington Elementary invited board members and the superintendent to Harrington to see the great things that are happening in their classrooms.

Megan Vandeboss, a parent wants kids back in school four days a week. She believes the current schedule was never meant to be a long-term goal siting the board had to know increasing in-person instruction would need to happen. She added it is not acceptable to not make a change to the learning plan; that teachers' comments are appreciated; and that children need to come first when making decisions.

Leslie Hagelgans, MMS teacher thanked the board for being innovative making the instructional choices they did for the beginning of the school year. She appreciates the resources teachers were given to employ 21<sup>st</sup> century learning for students. She indicated kids are thriving and showing growth; the hybrid form at is working; and they she would like to see the district stay with the current delivery of education.

Tracy Haroff, a parent of two elementary students and teacher at MHS spoke in support of the current in-person instruction grades K-5 and asked they board to stay with it to finish out the last two months of school. She asked the following questions: what the interpretation of six-foot distancing when feasible; what about masks that are not being worn; what percent of students are distancing appropriately; and what data was used in the arriving at the recommendation that is being made.

Valerie Dynda, a teacher at MMS thanked the board for the supports teachers have been given to help with the changes in instructional delivery. She questioned why increasing in-person instruction was happening now as currently the community is identified as being in the red zone by the health department due to the uptick in positive COVID cases. She shared that students are struggling to have enough time to eat their lunches due to the allotted time to do so; kids are in a groove, they made the change of instruction work for

them; and students are thriving. She asked that students not be made to make changes for the remainder of the year.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS RELATED TO THE  
DISTRICT'S PROPOSED CHANGE TO ITS COVID-19  
EXTENDED PREPAREDNESS PLAN FOR LEARNING ONLY**

Tracy Haroff, MHS teacher shared her concerns with adding another in-person instructional option for students; she does not support such a change for the final nine weeks of school. She asked the board to consider the rise in positive COVID cases that is occurring and asked if it is the best time to make another change.

Dave Turner, MHS Principal shared the benefits of the current hybrid model indicating it works; it represents the both of best worlds, while it is not perfect, it works. Given there are eight weeks of school left following spring break he asks if it is worth it to disrupt students and make them change schedules once again. He cautioned the inability to keep students distanced in the cafeteria; it will take alternative space and more individuals to monitor students.

Joanna Johnson shared her appreciation for all of the comments made by the MTA, administrators and the board. She indicated this is the time to lead; she believes the change can be done positively and successfully.

Kelly Fitzpatrick Gordon Elementary Principal indicated the board and the superintendent have always held data to a high standard. She asked what data was being used to make the decision to add the four day a week in-person instruction.

President Lindsey spoke on behalf of the board about comments made by emails. He explained each board member will not typically respond to emails rather they are shared with the superintendent to respond to.

**REVIEW OF DISTRICT'S PROPOSED CHANGES  
TO ITS COVID-19 EXTENDED LEARNING PLAN**

Superintendent Davis indicated for the sake of sharing the recommendation, and to open it up for discussion, he shared the options in the extended learning plan the board will consider.

Option A

1. The four-day choice for in-person learning will occur on M/T/Th/F. The fifth day of instruction will be done remotely for ALL students and will occur on Wednesdays.
2. The two-day choice in-person learning at MMS and MHS will follow the exiting cohort model. Cohort A will attend in-person M/T and cohort B will attend in-person on Th/F. The other three days will be done remotely.
3. The virtual only option will be offered to all K-12 students will continue to be provided by MPS teachers with all five days being done remotely.

Option B

1. The four-day choice for in-person learning will occur on M/T/Th/F. The fifth day of instruction will be done remotely for ALL students and will occur on Wednesdays.
2. The virtual only option will be offered to all K-12 students will continue to be provided by MPS teachers with all five days being done remotely.

Superintendent Davis indicated the difference between Option A and Option B is the cohort selection does not have to be made available. He shared percentages of two-way interactions for February 3<sup>rd</sup> thru March 9<sup>th</sup>.

President Lindsey requested a motion to consider the learning plan and to discuss it.

Moved M. Davis, supported by Nicholson, that Action Item – Curriculum and Instruction - Other specifically to consider changes to the plan. A roll call voted carried the motion with Lindsey, Nicholson, Middleton, M. Davis and Lanker in favor; Gamble opposed.

Superintendent applauded and supports the teachers for the work they have done; students at MMS have demonstrated achievement, this is outstanding. A lot of this work is because of small class sizes. It is known that in-person instruction is working; and that it took a long time to engage with some students online. He indicated the district knows that its parents need the flexibility to make the best decisions they can make, in the context of the COVID pandemic, and their desires to support their children in a safe manner relative to schooling. Following are statements he shared:

- The Board agreed to allow for a broader definition of social distancing and classroom spacing of students prior to our surveying the parents we serve about what changes they would make with their choice of the model of instruction that best suits their child(ren)'s needs. There was very little change in choices at the primary grades with 65% of enrolled students responding. It appears a total of 40 students are returning to in-person instruction across our elementary grades at this time. For the secondary grades, the middle school has 88% responding and the high school has 56% responding. At the middle school, 312 students requested a change mostly to the four days of weekly instruction from the cohort model. Only 62 have requested the two-day cohort model. There are 100 students requesting the virtual-only model. At the high school, 248 students requested a change mostly to the four days of weekly instruction from the cohort model. Only 71 have requested the two-day cohort model. There are 97 students requesting the virtual-only model. The Opportunity high School has enough capacity to safely adjust to any changes being requested by their students.
- The CDC has indeed reinforced my recommendation and your Board action with updated guidelines. The CDC guidelines allow for a minimum of 3 feet distance between student workstations within the classroom; provided masks are mandatory, frequent handwashing is expected, and adults (teachers and staff) maintain 6 feet of social distance from students. The CDC goes on to state that 6 feet social distancing of students during lunch, music/performing arts, and other group gatherings indoors (gym class) should be maintained. Social distancing of

six feet during breakfast and lunch will be the biggest challenge to bringing more students into our buildings for in-person instruction; especially in the secondary grades at the MMS and MHS.

- The CDC also provides guidance on quarantine duration for those exposed. To begin with, teachers & staff who have been vaccinated are not considered fully immunized until two weeks after receiving the second dose of vaccine. Our school personnel received their second dose of the vaccine on March 19th. Second, only after an individual is fully immunized, they do not need to quarantine when exposed to a COVID positive case (as long as symptoms are not present). This is a significant change in guidance regarding our teachers, staff, and administrators being best protected to remain consistent with educating our students.
- The evidence demonstrates in our own district that whenever there has been internal spread in our schools it has been most likely from adult to adult, or adult to student. To our knowledge, out of the 537 close contacts quarantined due to exposure in school, so far two adults came up positive and one student. Students are significantly less likely to spread the virus in schools to adults. There are national studies attesting to this same pattern across the country.
- The nine-week COVID Trend data through Saturday 03/20/2021 illustrates an increase over the past four weeks of the 7-day rate of positivity, the 7-day case numbers/100,000 in both the county and the Marshall School District; and the daily rate of hospitalizations in Calhoun county hospitals due to COVID has more than doubled in the past week going from 9 to 23 as of today. At the same time, over the past week MPS has reported six students and four staff members confirmed as COVID +; which is up from zero the previous week.
- With Spring Break quickly approaching, and Michigan now is one of the top four states in the country with highest reported confirmed COVID cases, there is a real concern locally, state-wide, and in the country of a possible surge over the next few weeks; especially with the B117 variant present in the state of Michigan.

Please know that our teachers, staff, and administrators are committed to doing what is right for our students first and foremost, and what is safe and right for all as we continue to educate our students during this pandemic. We are not all in agreement with next steps, but we will continue to put forth the best efforts we can to keep our organization moving forward.

Superintendent Davis' recommendations were as follows:

- The district will come back following spring break to a virtual-only week of instruction April 12-16, 2021 for all grades K-12. High School Juniors (only) will be given the opportunity to report in-person for SAT testing on Tuesday, April 13<sup>th</sup>.

- Elementary student instruction will begin five days of weekly instruction on April 19<sup>th</sup> for the primary grades K-5, with Wednesdays being early release days.
- Expand the secondary grades 6-12 to four days per week of instruction on April 19<sup>th</sup> for those who choose such an option. Wednesdays will remain a remote learning day.
- Continue the district's virtual-only option for grades K-12 for the remainder of the school year.

Superintendent Davis believes expanding instruction starting April 19<sup>th</sup> provides enough time to take steps to be ready. His hope is that the 2021-20211 school year brings more recognizable instruction.

Following is a compilation of board member comments and questions:

- What was used to decide on what to recommend? *Based on parents selecting four-days a week when surveyed.*
- What is being done to enforce mask wearing by students when in school? *Relying on parents to discuss with administrators to understand why their child is not wearing a mask.*

President Lindsey asked for a motion to continue the discussion.

Moved Nicholson, supported Middleton, that Action Item – Curriculum and Instruction – Other be approved as presented by Superintendent Davis. The motion was made to allow for the discussion to continue.

Board members comments and questions resumed:

- What will classrooms look like; are capacity limits known for each room; before the pandemic social distancing students in classrooms was four feet apart will this be reduced to three feet now? *The CDC indicates three feet is acceptable and the district may need to implement it in some cases.*
- It has been a struggle since day one of the pandemic. The right decision is not known; there is no black and white data to be able to decide what to do. Safety, achievement and resources are factors to consider in arriving at a decision. There are no clear answers. Need more information on operational plans before any decision should be made.
- Education should be the priority and it feels like emphasis is being put on sports where much of the exposure to COVID is occurring between students. There should be no inside sports or practices being conducted. There are students failing as well as many cases of drops in grades. There is a potential that the district may not make it to April 19<sup>th</sup> to implement if the current uptick in COVID cases in Michigan continues. What is the difference in virtual versus remote learning? The district considered a third-party vendor to provide virtual classes; it was not wanted by teachers. Would like to see more live streaming of classes.
- There is no right answer. Can only make a best decision that is best for the entire district. It is disappointing to have to revisit this. Appreciates the enthusiasm

- shared by teachers during public comment. Personally, their child is not successful in the hybrid model. It was this board member's sense that discussion of changing delivery of instruction at the prior board meeting was that it was being considered for the 2021-22 school year.
- Is protection from contracting COVID present two weeks following the last injection of the COVID vaccine? *Yes, that is when the vaccination reaches its peak.*
  - No matter what decision is made everyone will not be pleased. How is equitable education provided when some homes do not have reliable internet? It's time to come together. How come we can't figure this out? It's about how the district wants to cross the finish line.
  - Agree with what has been said. Maybe what was thought to be important is not. It is known that traditional school does not work for every student. Take time to see how students are doing. If no internet why not put those kids in school where provisions are set up for them. Answers are needed before being able to vote. We've learned that students are excelling online and some with only attending school in-person two days a week. Is there another underlying question? Need to make sure every student is getting what they need. Paths are needed for students to achieve.
  - A large number of students want to return to in-person instruction four days a week at MMS; are their resources enough to carry this out by April 19? *Yes, the only identified issues are what to do about lunches, social distancing and staff monitoring.*
  - Does the recommendation have provisions for increases in positive COVID cases? *No, not based on changes in a surge.*
  - What does the health department think about the recommended changes? *They are concerned about social distancing.*
  - Is it possible to put a cohort of students at MOHS since space is an issue? *Finding teachers to teach them would be difficult.*
  - The date of March 29<sup>th</sup> was talked about as a possible implementation date. Will there be a shortage of teachers if the change occurs on April 19<sup>th</sup> ?
  - For clarification, what is the quarantine time for individuals who are vaccinated, been exposed to COVID but are not experiencing any symptoms? *As long as an individual is fully vaccinated, been exposed and is not exhibiting any symptoms they do not have to quarantine.*
  - Do elementary students attending in-person get to choose between attending Monday – Friday or M/Tu/Th/F? *No, there will be only one option for in-person instruction for elementary students: full days M/Tu/Th/F with Wednesday being shortened.*
  - What is happening with truancy? *It's about student engagement; students can be engaged and not attending in-person.*

**ACTION ITEM – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION – OTHER**  
**RECONFIRM COVID-19 EXTENDED LEARNING PLAN WITH CHANGES AS**  
**RECOMMENDED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT:** As required the district must hold a Reconfirmation Meeting every 30 days to review the COVID-19 Extended Preparedness

and Response Plan for Learning. Recommended changes to the plan were submitted by Superintendent Davis.

President Lindsey restated the motion that was made earlier in the meeting and a vote was taken.

Moved Nicholson, supported Middleton, that Action Item – Curriculum and Instruction – Other be approved as presented. A roll-call vote carried the motion with Lindsey, Nicholson, Middleton and Lankerd in favor; M. Davis and Gamble opposed.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA MINUTES, EXPENDITURES AND PERSONNEL**

Items included on the consent agenda were minutes of the February 22, 2021 business and closed/executive sessions, March 4, 2021 board retreat/special meeting, and March 8, 2021 work and closed/executive sessions; February disbursements in the amount of \$2,647,235.88; employments of Richard Annorat as teacher at Harrington Elementary, Jennifer Uldriks as childcare director at the Shamrock Center; and a School of Choice Resolution for 2021-2022.

Moved by M. Davis, supported by Middleton, that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda – Minutes, Expenditures, Personnel and Other as presented. A roll-call vote carried the motion unanimously.

#### **REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

*SPECIAL RECOGNITION:* Superintendent Davis presented background information about each hire included on the consent agenda.

Superintendent Davis recognized the upcoming retirement of Marie Dennis an elementary teacher at Walters Elementary. Ms. Dennis will retire at end of the current school year. She was thanked for her many years of service with the district.

*2021-2022 INCOMING KINDERGARTEN CLASS:* Walters Elementary School Principal Paul Holbrook shared information about kindergarten registration; how it was managed prior to COVID; and how it is managed now. Online videos, information, a questionnaire, and a way to submit questions are available on the district's web site. Plans are for students to be accessed in-person in August. There are no plans for tours of schools or bus rides for the incoming kindergarteners.

*DISTRICT HUB FOR COMMUNICATIONS:* Gordon Elementary School Principal Kelly Fitzpatrick shared she heads the district's Communication Committee. The committee identified that communication was flawed in the district; and that currently communication is categorized. The committee has worked on presenting communication through classification by section with the goal of making it easily accessible. She demonstrated the hub and added that it is not yet live. She will share it with board members to they may test pilot it.

*LEADERSHIP TEAM REPORTS:* Superintendent Davis indicated that Leadership Team Reports were included in the board's packet.

**DISCUSSION**

*RECENT COVID IMPACTS ON SCHOOLS:* There was nothing more to report as the information was reviewed earlier in the meeting.

*CALHOUN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT (CISD) GENERAL FUND BUDGET:* Superintendent Davis read the requirements of the district as it relates to the CISD's General Fund Budget; a resolution will be brought before the Board for action prior to June 1, 2021 as required.

*DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE:* Superintendent Davis referred board members to the proposal from Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) for strategic planning services. He indicated the first part would be a about Board Governance a training that would take approximately 3 ½ hours. The strategic planning portion is presented in a series. MASB is available to start the training this summer and they could start sooner if needed so it could be completed before the bond vote. Their services do not address the interest in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Service Training. While MASB is starting such training, they have not yet actually done it. He recommended going with another company that has guidance in the school setting with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training. He asked the board to consider authorizing him to move forward with contracting with MASB at a cost of \$9,125.

Moved by Lankerd, supported by Middleton, to authorize the superintendent to contract with MASB for Strategic Planning Services. The motion was made to allow for the discussion to continue.

Trustee Gamble indicated it might make sense fiscally and strategically to find an agency that can provide both for the district. She is aware of such entities that do both.

Superintendent Davis asked MASB about their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Services, they are just finishing development of them and MPS would be one of their pilot districts if they were selected to do the training. He believes it would be best to go with another entity. MASB does the best training for Board Governance and have credibility across the state.

Trustee M. Davis asked if the Board Governance training is part of the package with MASB to which Superintendent Davis responded the Strategic Planning costs were around \$8,600 with Board Governance as an add on of approximately \$500.

Trustee Gamble asked if some more information can be collected before voting since the item is listed on the agenda under discussion and not an action item; and to be clear on what the Board is being asked to approve. She does not believe there is enough information to move forward with it; she wants it to be clear what the board is voting on; and she would like quotes from other agencies that can do all of the training in one.

Superintendent Davis explained the proposal from MASB is strictly for Board Governance and Strategic Planning.

Trustee Lankerd suggested tabling any action until the next board meeting.

Moved Lankerd, supported by M. Davis to table the decision for approving Strategic Planning Services and to consider it at a future meeting. A roll-call vote carried the motion unanimously.

*ALBION WATSON STREET FACILITY:* Superintendent Davis explained responses, from Rob Rohlman of CSM Group and also Kingscott, were included in the board packet in regard to the Marshall Opportunity High School (MOHS) Facility on Watson Street. A proposal came up before the Board about two years ago to renovate all of the classrooms on the North East corner of the complex and design this section for early childhood space with the idea that all of programs operating at the Crowell Building would move to the facility on Watson Street by their choice or not. A sub-contractor with GSRP has asked if they could rent space for their program. The cost to renovate the necessary space for this would be &1.5M and the construction could be done and completed by Fall 2021 with most of the costs coming from the Sinking Fund. He presented this now for the purpose of discussion only.

Trustee Lankerd believes it is a larger discussion about what the vision is for the Watson Street Campus; what the district wants it to look like, what it needs to be; more conversations need to occur first before deciding on any upgrades.

Trustee Gamble indicated for the sake of transparency one of the things that has been heard consistently is that parent do not want their younger children at MOHS. This is something the board will need to consider, and it is also part of the larger conversation. Are parents still feeling that way; and what would that mean for the program?

*TRANSPORTATION BUS PRESENTATION:* Director of Business Operations Becky Jones introduced Assistant Director of Transportation Monique Bryant to present information about the district's bus fleet. Ms. Bryant provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining a 12-year replacement plan for purchasing buses. She made the Board aware there would be a request coming this year and one next school year to purchase two new buses each year. She added that typically the district purchases the buses it leases for MYCA as they have been utilized by the district since they were new.

**APPROVAL OF ACTION ITEM – PERSONNEL – SUPERINTENDENT SUPERINTENDENT CONTRACT AMENDMENTS:** In compliance with Paragraph 17 of the Superintendent's Contract of Employment, that the Board authorize the following amendments to the Superintendent's Contract of Employment:

- Duration through June 30, 2023
- Base salary increased by 4.5% to \$146,060
- Deadline for annual evaluation moved to November 30
- Reaffirmation of \$10,000 annual annuity
- Reaffirmation of stipend of 3% of base salary for overseeing MYCA

Moved by Lankerd, supported by Gamble, that the Board of Education approve Action Item – Personnel – Superintendent as presented. A roll-call vote carried the motion unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dave Turner, MHS Principal indicated that while he does not approve of the decision the Board made. He will however, do his best to implement the changes to in-person instruction at the high school to make it successful for everyone.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Trustee M. Davis congratulated Ms. Dennis on her retirement and wished her the best adding that many students have coveted her as their favorite teacher. He recognized the success of students and teachers in these challenging times.

Secretary Middleton recognized MMS Basketball Coach Shannon Robinson for the success her middle school basketball team achieved; and the outstanding job MHS Boys Swimming and Diving Team achieved of by placing first in the SCC League Champions for the fifth year in a row.

Trustee Lankerd thanked teachers and parents for their comments and emails.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

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LISA MIDDLETON, SECRETARY

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KIMBERLY VANWORMER, RECORDING SECRETARY