

The Board of Education of the Fairfield City School District in the County of Butler, Ohio, held a Special Meeting on the 28th of July 2020 that was held at Fairfield Freshman School Auditorium.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 am by the President, Mr. Berding.

ROLL CALL – Present: Mr. Begley, Mr. Berding, Mrs. Gundrum, Mrs. O’Neal & Mrs. Shorter
Absent: None

Also present: Mr. Smith, Mr. Martin, Mrs. Aug, Mr. Penney & Mr. Clemmons
Absent: Mrs. Lane

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Carrie O’Neal

20-70 ASSIGNMENT OF BRIAN BEGLEY AS TREASURER PRO TEM

MOTION – Moved by Mr. Berding to appoint Brian Begley as Treasurer Pro Tem.

SECOND – Seconded by Mrs. O’Neal

ROLL CALL – Ayes: Mr. Begley, Mr. Berding, Mrs. Gundrum, Mrs. O’Neal & Mrs. Shorter
Nays: None
Motion Carried: 5-0

20-71 MOTION TO AMEND THE AGENDA ORDER TO PRESENT THE RESTART PROGRAM BEFORE THE COMMUNICATION SECTION OF THE AGENDA

MOTION – Moved by Mr. Berding to amend the agenda to move presentation of the Restart Program before the Communication Section of the agenda.

SECOND – Seconded by Mr. Begley

ROLL CALL – Ayes: Mr. Begley, Mr. Berding, Mrs. Gundrum, Mrs. O’Neal & Mrs. Shorter
Nays: None
Motion Carried: 5-0

SUPERINTENDENT’S RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS

A. Item for Board Discussion

1. FCSD Reset and Restart Plan for 2020-2021 – Billy Smith and Mandy Aug

Mr. Smith recommended to the Board the Hybrid Model for the Restart of the 2020-2021 school year.

He stated that the decision was not made lightly and that the plan errs on the side of caution when welcoming 10,000 students and 1,000 staff back into the district buildings.

The decision was made based on input from the Butler County Health Department weekly meetings and the data that shows that the zip codes that feed into the school district represent 41.8 percent of the total positive cases of COVID in Butler County.

He thanked the Butler County Health Department for their continued assistance.

Additionally, he stated that the District needs to remain flexible and transparent. He acknowledged that consistency is important for our students. He believes that the Hybrid Model provides the best chance for schools to remain open for a longer period of time; however, there are no guarantees.

The District will make every attempt to provide social distancing of six feet. Students will be encouraged to social distance in the hallways rather than congregate and talk.

The Health Department has provided guidance on how quarantine will be handled. The District is required to prepare a list of students and staff that were within six feet or less of an individual that tests positive for COVID so all parties can be advised of the contact. All students and staff that have had contact with the positive case will be quarantined for 14 days, even if they have a negative test result.

In order to train staff on the Hybrid Model and to train on the remote learning that will be required for that model, he is recommending that the start of school be moved to August 24th.

The District must be prepared to change “on a dime” and many employees have been working on a number of plans for the last three weeks. This has been a very emotional and trying time for the administrative team, the Board of Education and the staff as conditions change the plans quickly.

He spoke on behalf of the staff that want to teach and take care of our kids, the staff that miss the kids and the kids that miss the staff.

He feels that the Hybrid Model gives the students the best chance at coming back safely.

Mrs. Aug presented what the Hybrid Model will look like.

She emphasized that every day is a school day, regardless if the student is in the classroom or at home. The challenge is to define what is most important during face to face time with the students and what the students can take ownership to learn on the other three days that they are not in the classroom. This will vary with the grade level of the student.

The delayed start will allow staff to collaborate.

All assignments will be in Progress Book. Assignments can be turned in to the “Google Classroom” which will reduce paper handling in the classroom.

Students will have electives available with the Hybrid Plan. Remote learning students will not have electives as an option.

Teachers are required to answer questions parents may have. Teachers will need extra time for responses on days when students are in the classroom.

The deadline to change sign up for virtual learning or to move from virtual learning to the Hybrid Model has been extended to August 3rd.

The District has not received the additional laptops from the manufacturer as promised. The latest projection date on shipment is the first week in September.

At this time, computers for 6-8 graders and seniors are available.

Additionally, 200 devices will be distributed to each elementary to be used in the buildings to teach students how to navigate in preparation for virtual instruction time at home. Parents will be able to request laptops and internet access in Final Forms.

Board member discussion:

Mr. Begley asked if the Group A and Group B students would have the same classroom teacher for the remote portion of their learning.

Response: Yes

Mrs. O'Neal pointed out that time tables can change based on the data.

Mrs. Shorter asked if students can have access to the building wi-fi in the parking lot of the school that they attend.

Response: Yes

Mrs. Shorter asked if the IEP students will have similar instruction to the end of the year services?

Ms. Gilbert has been involved in all of the discussions and the accommodations required for the student will be honored regardless of the learning option chosen.

Mrs. Shorter asked how AP classes and gifted classes will be handled.

Response: The classrooms will likely look more like a resource room. The District does not want any student to feel that they are not getting what they need. The District will have to review how many students sign up for AP classes to see what the virtual option will look like.

Mrs. Gundrum expressed concern regarding how long it will take to receive results after symptoms are identified.

Mr. Smith reminded everyone that Primary Health has expanded testing dates to three days for staff, students, and families of staff and students.

Mr. Berding asked if there is a plan when a holiday occurs.

Response: That is something that nobody thought of. One of the reasons that the plan was presented is to resolve such issues.

Mr. Berding stated the plan for the communication portion of the meeting and explained that the comments would be taken into consideration.

COMMUNICATION

This is the portion of the meeting where you are invited to share your thoughts with the Board. Please know that this time has been set aside for the Board to listen to you. Your comments are valued and will be taken into careful consideration. The Board will not engage in dialogue at this time. Presentations are limited to five (5) minutes each.

Community members addressed the Board with their concerns regarding school start up for the 2020-2021 school year.

Mr. Smith stated that he has reviewed all of the information available to him and that it has been a very emotional week for him. He admits that he does not have all of the answers. He does not take his decision lightly; he knows that he cannot make everyone happy with his decision.

He has concerns about the shortage of teacher substitutes as well as subs for lunchroom workers and bus drivers.

He thanked those who spoke in the communication portion of the meeting and appreciated that the comments were not a personal attack on him.

Mrs. Aug stated that the pre-school students will attend 4 days per week and that the MD units will meet 4 days per week.

Mrs. O'Neal and Mr. Begley thanked the public that spoke in the communication section of the meeting.

Mrs. Shorter stated that this is a difficult task. She appreciated the comments made by the public. Mandates that must be implemented make it difficult to have face-to-face instruction. She always has the economically disadvantaged students in her heart and wants to be sure that their needs are met.

Mrs. Gundrum restated that this is a tough spot for many people, including child care issues. She realizes that while some students thrive, remote learning is not for everyone. She acknowledges that for some students, their teacher is a role model. She is concerned that contact tracing will snowball and deplete the number of teachers.

Mr. Berding thanked the community participants for speaking today.

Mr. Smith read the resolution stated here to the Board.

20-72 RESOLUTION FOR THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF FAIRFIELD CITY SCHOOLS DURING THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR/APPROVAL OF REVISIONS TO 2020-2021 SCHOOL CALENDAR

MOTION – Moved by Mr. Berding to approve the following

B. Other Items for Board Action

1. Recommend Approval of the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION FOR THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF FAIRFIELD CITY
SCHOOLS DURING THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

WHEREAS, Butler County, Ohio is currently at Level 2 regarding the COVID-19 pandemic as recently determined by the State of Ohio, having recently dropped from Level 3; and

WHEREAS, this Board believes that at Level 2 the District's school buildings can be operated with students and staff present with appropriate safety precautions taken as recommended by the State of Ohio and Butler County Health Department; and

WHEREAS, this Board believes that the District's students and parents/guardians should be provided with an alternative virtual learning option in lieu of in-person attendance at school buildings.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education of the Fairfield City School District as follows:

Section 1. All District schools will be open for student and staff attendance as provided in Section 2 hereof with the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, subject to the requirement that applicable guidelines of the State of Ohio and Butler County Health Department are to be followed to the extent practicable.

Section 2. The Board hereby authorizes and adopts the hybrid model as defined by the Fairfield City Schools Instructional Models Plan attached hereto as Exhibit "A" to provide a blend of traditional instruction and at-home learning where students attend school two days per week and learn at home three days per week.

Section 3. The Board also hereby authorizes and approves an alternative virtual learning option in lieu of the hybrid model described in Section 2 above for those parents/guardians and/or students who do not wish to attend school buildings in person. This option will be developed and implemented by the Superintendent and Curriculum Department. The parents/guardians or the student will select this option depending upon the age and/or legal status of the student.

Section 4. The Superintendent is hereby directed to implement the programs identified in Sections 2 and 3 above and to establish and provide procedures, guidelines and regulations for the implementation of said programs as necessary or appropriate.

Section 5. The provisions of this resolution shall remain subject to future modification or revocation by further action of this Board.

2. Recommend Approval of Revisions to the 2020-2021 School Calendar

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mrs. O'Neal

She stated that she is not directing her comments or her vote on the Hybrid Model at the District.

She believes that the emotional and social needs of the students outweigh the risk of students and staff contracting COVID. She quoted references that support that belief. She appreciates the fact that guidelines must be followed and realizes that this is the best plan to stay within the parameters. However, she does not agree with the parameters that have been established.

Mr. Begley

He stated that the goal is to provide safety to the community. He realizes that mandates must be weighed and that the District must draw on the opinions of medical experts. There will be guidelines to follow concerning risks and consequences. The best option to maintain in person instruction is to have half of the people on the bus, in the lunchroom and in the classroom. This reduces the number of staff that are out which forces remote as the only option.

Mr. Berding

While he agrees with Mrs. O'Neal's concerns, he reiterated the concerns of contact tracing and the problem of subs if school is open 5 days. He acknowledges the hardship on households, including those of his family.

He stated that staff are in favor of the Hybrid Model.

SECOND – Seconded by Mr. Begley

ROLL CALL – Ayes: Mr. Begley, Mr. Berding, Mrs. Gundrum & Mrs. Shorter

Nays: Mrs. O'Neal

Motion Carried: 4-1

20-73 ADJOURNMENT

MOTION – Moved by Mrs. O'Neal to adjourn the meeting.

SECOND – Seconded by Mr. Begley

ROLL CALL – Ayes: Mr. Begley, Mr. Berding, Mrs. Gundrum, Mrs. O'Neal & Mrs. Shorter

Nays: None

Motion Carried: 5-0

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 am by the President, Mr. Berding.

President

Attest: _____
Treasurer