



Board of Education Recap

August 4, 2020

Dear Vikings,

Last night, our Board of Education met for the purposes of continuing preparations for the start to school. Below, please find a few important details related to their work.

In “Discussion” Items:

Questions for District Level Leaders Regarding Their Return to School Work Group Reports: As you may recall, the District established 11 work groups, mirroring each of the sections found in the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s “[Education Forward](#)” plan. Each of the work group leaders were on-hand to answer questions about their recommendations to the Board. Those recommendations [may be found here](#). We are grateful for all of the parents, students, medical professionals, and staff members who volunteered their time.

COVID-19 Update: One of the priorities atop our “to do list” was determining the metrics by which we return to school. The District unveiled a *draft* “[Gradual Reopening Plan](#)”. Four steps were established for the Board and community’s consideration. Several criteria were established for the movement between each of the steps. The criteria match those established by Public Health Madison and Dane County. Their [Forward Dane](#) plan and [the associated metrics](#) were developed with epidemiologists and medical professionals. It should be noted the draft “Gradual Reopening Plan” was only a starting point for discussion. Communication with our medical advisor and Public Health Madison and Dane County should continue to occur in order to ensure the plan is appropriate and reasonable.

The thorough efforts of the aforementioned work groups led to a number of “Action” items for the Board’s consideration. The following were approved:

- Consider a motion to revise the [Advanced Learners Program Guide](#) to reflect alterations to the universal assessments in a pandemic/virtual environment;
- Consider a motion which permits the District’s full slate of co-regular/athletic programming to proceed in a virtual environment only until further notice; and
- As it relates to our 4K partner sites, two motions were considered. First, permission for 4K community sites to continue preschool services without change until further notice (one exception, Wednesdays, not Mondays will be a non-contact day in our 4K program). Second, the potential reassignment of District staff to assist in the successful implementation of school at our 4K partner sites.

Due to a lack of a full Board, as required for approving policies on a first reading, amending the [Student Dress Code](#) policy to permit face masks during a pandemic will wait until the Board’s next meeting, August 17.

There were two recommendations made by the administration for the Board’s consideration:

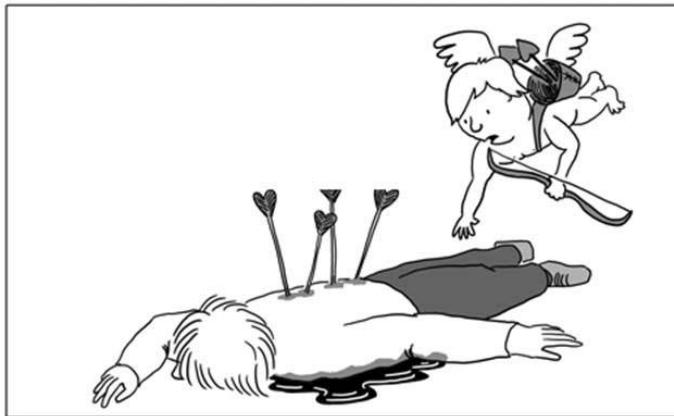
1. In light of the decision to begin the school year in a full “virtual plus model,” the [school calendar](#) needed to reflect that change. We are working on the development of a model that does include synchronous and recorded delivery of instruction on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. (I promise details are coming. Our team is working as fast as they can.) Wednesdays would permit time for educators to re-teach and extend learning. In addition, communication with families, advisory/social emotional learning opportunities, and individualized supports can be provided. This calendar was approved.
2. As the District prepares for the next phase of online registration, the administration proposed a moratorium on several fees. [A link to the revised fee structure may be found here](#). This was approved.



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The Board considered two additional action items related to the personnel side of the house. First, they discussed where it would be best for staff members to complete their important work. Several themes emerged: it is optimal to have staff in the building, flexibility is important, different content areas might need additional time in the building, and what impact does "virtual plus" require of staffing in building? District leaders will propose a formal plan for the Board's consideration at their next meeting. Such action could reflect the draft "[Gradual Reopening Plan](#)".

Secondly, direction from the Board was sought regarding the layoff status of employees whose work schedule could be reduced or eliminated due to the implementation of the virtual plus model (e.g. bus drivers, school nutrition, and some custodians and paraprofessionals). At first glance, it might be reasonable to assume layoffs are appropriate; however, I believe it is a mistake for individuals to assume laying off these positions for a short period of time would not be without cost, fiscally and intangibly. There are unintended consequences...



...Hello? Gary?

From a fiscal perspective, of course, unemployment insurance would apply for those qualifying. In addition, the potential number of individuals receiving benefits would likely increase the District's UI costs at renewal. More importantly, however, is the strong likelihood these dedicated employees would need to seek alternative employment in order to meet their own financial obligations. This would adversely impact the District's ability to "ramp up" our full return to school. For example, finding bus drivers continues to be a concern. It requires significant recruiting, training and state licensing. If those individuals elected to leave, the impact on our families could not be fully calculated. (e.g. staggered start times, reduced services, extend times on busses, and double routes would need consideration). That in itself is an expensive proposition. This concern is not exclusive to our drivers. Rather, the administrative team proposed developing plans which would permit purposeful and worthwhile work to occur for these important members of our team.

Lastly, the Board took action to approve the [annual meeting agenda](#) and a [plan](#) to honor in-person participation when offering public comment and voting at this important meeting.

Even in the very busiest of times...

I am proud to be a Viking and I hope you are too!

With deep appreciation,

Steve Salerno