

February 1, 2021 - Wasatch County School District Board of Education Study Session (Monday, February 1, 2021)

Generated by Stacey Moore on Saturday, February 2, 2021

A. Call To Order

Procedural: 1. Roll Call of Members Board President, Tom Hansen Kimberly Dickerson Marianne B Allen Cory Holmes Superintendent Paul Sweat Business Administrator Keith Johansen Excuse Board Member Tyler Bluth
Board President, Tom Hansen
Kimberly Dickerson
Marianne B Allen
Cory Holmes
Superintendent Paul Sweat
Business Administrator Keith Johansen

Guest Speakers

- o Randall Probst, Health Department Officer
- o Dr. Larsen & Dr. Tidwell
- o Aubreigh Parks, School Nurse
- o Dr. Benjamin Springer, Director of Special Education
- o Dr. Garrick Peterson, Director of Academics

Dr. Garrick Peterson, Director of Academics

As we reflect on the past year, our greatest concerns have been the health and safety for students and teachers, and learning. We are getting more concerned about the long term ramifications to students and the work it will take to catch them back up. Quarantines are creating the biggest challenge. If we want kids to be successful in school students they need to show up and turn in the work. Attendance is key to kids success. The failure rate for the middle school, in the last two quarters, has doubled. At WHS it has gone up around 70%. The Hispanic population is being impacted the most, as well as the low income students. Generally, these are the kids who already need extra work and now it is worse. We watch reading data in elementary school. We are down in the pass rate in every school. The area we saw hurt the most from the shut down last March was in Kindergarten and First grade reading. Our teachers are doing a phenomenal job, but it is a battle to get kids to school and staying in school. Attendance data reviewed to show how many students have been out of school. November was a high month for students being out of school. On the academic side of things, if we can keep kids in school they can be successful. When they are out we all struggle. We have plans for summer school and have a lot of focus on interventions. I am so worried about the kids that aren't in school. Unless there is a high need to close down the school, we need to be weary of the long term ramifications. Teachers reach breaking point when they have a lot of kids out of school and have to find the balance of teaching in person and online. At one point 30% of students were out of school. Recently we are at a 5-6% rate of absenteeism with the new quarantine rule, it is much better.

Dr. Ben Springer, Director of Special Education

It has been a wild year in Special Education. Coming back to school was one of the best things we could have done for students and families, particularly for student with special needs and mental health concerns. Being a steward for students with special needs, returning to school was key to supporting this population. Our severe students and families wanted kids back in schools regardless of the COVID concerns. They don't have the supports at home that the schools are able to give to them. They struggled on a daily basis. They have expressed gratitude that we have allowed them to return to school. I am proud for the steps that Wasatch has made to support our students and to return to school. We recently surveyed families for the Wasatch Wellness Center, we learned that families want to have access to the resources that we provide to them. Some concerns and topics from the survey were 1)Managing Screen Time, 2) Social Media Interactions, 3) Coping with Anxiety - this is the number one concern, 4) Teaching responsibly at school and at home 5) Coping with COVID-19 - this is less of a concern, 6) Coping with depression - this is a very high concern, 7) Budgeting and Financial Management, 8) Building Resilience. For any of us working in mental health during this pandemic, we watch the stress model the leads to suicide. The increase in how to help anxieties in households has jumped during the pandemic. We should be on high alert in Utah because we are already high without the pandemic going on. School provides protective services to these families to help with anxieties. Schools relieve the burden to families, particularly those families with special needs.

Aubreigh Parks, School Nurse

The reporting platform that we have built shows numbers by school, divided by primary and secondary. There is an upward trend at the secondary schools. Our school manual guidelines state that a 1% threshold at the HS and 15 at the other schools. Our school quarantines have gone down dramatically. They were in the hundreds, now they are in the single digits. Report includes Quarantines from School Exposures, Quarantines from Outside of School Exposures, Test Log Data (antegen tests are less accurate, we may be missing positive tests). We have sat at a high positive result percentage, we would like to be under 5%. We are seeing spread in schools. We are impacted by spread in sports. Elementary schools are doing great at controlling their spread.

Cases within 14 days of Exposure at School tab shows the current cases that we believe were exposed at a secondary school (11 at WHS). 75% come from athletics.

Dr. Larsen and Dr. Tidwell, Pediatricians

Dr. Larsen

What I am seeing is elementary school students adapting. They wear their masks, wipe desks down and are being obedient. I am sure elementary exposure is less than 1%. I would say those kids are safer at school. WCSD has done a good job of keeping kids safe. For teenagers, I have seen a lot of anxiety and paranoia during this past school year. I have no sick patients, due to masking and mitigation efforts. The students who are quarantined for long periods of time seem to struggle the most.

Dr. Owen Tidwell

I also do not have sick kids because of the commendable job that is being done in the schools. ER visits for suicide are up over 30% in the past 12 months. Friends and routines are important to families and students. Being occupied is best. Primary patients that I see are high schoolers, more recently I am seeing middle school.

Randall Probst, Health Department Officer

It has always been my feeling to keep kids in schools. You also know that I will always follow the data that best supports keeping kids in school. We have used the data to push the thresholds to close schools. I have to be honest with the data, when it shows that we are going in the wrong direction, then we have to pay attention to that. The rolling 14-day case percentage by case date report shows that the community is showing a decline in cases, but the schools are going up. The data shows that kids are not safer in schools. When we are contact tracing we can confirm that mitigation efforts are being made. When there is a lack in contact tracing or mitigation efforts then we see an increase. We look at trends in positive cases and outbreaks to help slow the spread. The district has done a great job of testing to help with tracing. I have no doubt that kids in school is the best thing. That is the school districts role. The data is showing that we need to have a plan to slow the spread if we aren't going to close schools. In addition, kids are not unique - suicides are happening in all ages. It is best for families to have the routine of kids going to school, parents going to work and businesses being open. We follow the guidelines set for us, we will also help the school district respond to follow the thresholds and guidelines. I suspect that we will see changes to the guidelines because of vaccinations. My purpose tonight is not to tell you what to do. I have to be honest, I cannot say that I support staying open without making a plan to change the trend of the data. Better contact tracing and validating that students are wearing masks and demonstrating efforts to mitigate the spread. School exposure rates will change the community spread numbers. I want to do whatever we can to keep the kids in school. We need to re-enforce mitigation efforts, that will help with the spread. Contact tracing also needs to be better.

Superintendent Sweat -

Thank you to those that presented tonight. Randall is a great partner, and we appreciate his being supportive and positive. As the Supt. I want you to know that we hear you. Thank you for the message and we are hearing it. We had a reset in process last week with administration. We discussed numbers, mitigation and making a better effort. Winter sports are wrapping up. The key points to focus on for a plan includes campaigning and asking teachers and students to be better.

Kirsta Albert, PR Director -

As we are seeing mask fatigue in the secondary schools. The campaign and strategy to keep kids in school. "Save Our Senior Year, Save Our School Year". Maximize the message with incentives and sharing the message with our partners in the community. The message is strong that we want to keep kids in school, and we need to mask up to do that.

Tod Johnson - I personally hope that we don't have a school closure. Students want to stay engaged in school and extracurricular. I am supportive of the reset and the campaign. The high school makes an announcement reminding kids to wear a mask. Teachers will also need to enforce mask wearing in the class.

Supt. Sweat - When we lay a vision out to be better and keep schools open, it is with students and all of us doing our part. The campaign has begun and is in motion. Board members please provide any ideas that you have to include.

Marianne Allen - I like the campaign, it creates ownership for students, parents and the community. Sharing out the numbers at a school level may also help our efforts. It seems like a simple thing. From an admin perspective, the numbers would help them too. I would like to see the number shared out as "lets work together". I appreciate that you have reached out to admin. With sports, is there a plan? I was a head soccer coach. I am not looking to close sports, but I want us to be safe. What about more testing on sports?

Shawn Kelly - We have to follow the same guidelines that other high schools are using.

Kim Dickerson - We should reengage families to take temperatures at home and watching for symptoms at home.

Tom Hansen - The obligation fo the board is to evaluate the conditions and make a decision to transition to online learning. There has to be a vote to move to an emergency board meeting. The meeting would need to be noticed and open to the public.

Marianne Allen - I make a motion to move to an emergency board meeting for the purpose of a vote being taken to transition to online school.

Cory Holmes - 2nd motion to move to an emergency board meeting.

WASATCH HOSTING EVENTS -

February 18th, we are hosting the 5A wrestling tournament. There will only be two spectators per wrestlers. Masking is required. Wasatch will also host the 5A State Swim Meet ON February 19th. No spectators.

The city invited the school board to present to them. March 2nd or February 16th.

February 18th is state wrestling tournament, we would like to move the board meeting to February 17th to have the option to support the athletes.

Occasionally unforeseen circumstances make it necessary for a school board to hold a special meeting to consider matters of an emergency or urgent nature. In these circumstances, the 24-hour notice requirement may be disregarded and the board may give the best notice practicable of the time and place of the meeting and the topics to be considered. Before a school board can hold an emergency meeting, there must be an attempt to notify all of the board members, and a majority of the board must vote in favor of holding the emergency meeting.

C. Adjournment

Action, Procedural: 1. Adjourn Meeting

Motion to adjourn meeting to move into an executive session for personnel and land discussion, then into an emergency board meeting.

First by Kim Dickerson, second

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Cory Holmes, Tom Hansen, Marianne B. Allen, Kimberly Dickerson

D. Executive Session