

Members Present: C. Brown, K. Denzer, N. Donnay, J. Gottschalk, R. Hajlo, D. Keyes, A. Melendres (via Zoom)

Members Absent: S. Mueller

Board Advisors Present: J. Gutierrez, K. Gutierrez (via Zoom)

Call to Order

R. Hajlo called the board meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda includes the Board Minutes from November 17, the Executive Director's Report and the Board Calendar. The Executive Director's Report notes that the Informational webinar held on Wednesday night had 38 attendees, the 2021-2022 open enrollment closes Friday, January 8; and next Tuesday will be the lottery for the fall kindergarten classes and all grade waitlists.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda: J. Gottschalk

Second: D. Keyes

Approved: All

Board Structure/Appointment/2021 Board Election – N. Donnay

Current board structure consists of 8 members: 4 teacher board members, 3 parent board members and 1 community member. Our board is typically 4 teacher board members, 4 parent board members and 1 community member. If any board member resigns, the board can appoint a board member to serve out the remainder of the board term. Board practice has been to fill the board position with the candidate who was not elected in the previous board election however, this past May, Drew Melendres ran uncontested so there is no candidate to fill the vacancy. The other option is to fill the position by a board election. The election process requires we give voters 60 days to solicit potential candidates and then give 30 day notice for the election. Once elected, the board member will go through board training and then typically seated at the August board meeting.

Shane Mueller was a parent board member but stepped into Jim Markoe's community member seat when Shane's son graduated from Prep and Jim resigned his position. The board voted in November to transfer Jim Markoe's end term date to Shane Mueller (will end August 2022). In August 2021, we will have two board seats that are up for election – Kristen Denzer (parent seat) and Jake Gottschalk (teacher seat) in addition to the open parent seat.

The Governance Committee recommends that we will include the open parent member seat in May's board election, along with another parent member seat and a teacher seat rather than going through the process of appointing a parent by seeking potential candidates, publishing a Voter's Guide and holding a special election.

Report from School Re-Opening Board Committee – A. Melendres

The committee met on December 17. We discussed LS students returning to in-person, starting as early as January 18, and gradual rollout of three grades at a time with at least two transitional planning days. Recommendation is K-2 start back on January 25 allowing for three planning days at the end of the quarter. Two weeks later, add grades 3-4 starting on Monday, February 8.

Additional mitigation strategies include staff must wear masks and shields, specialist classes except for PE will be held in the classrooms, indoor PE require masks to be worn, optional staff Covid testing on site every other week, plastic barriers will be installed when 6' distancing cannot be maintained between students and teachers and at least 3' classroom distancing recommended at all times.

Grades 5-12 still subject to the MN Safe Learning Plan and the board approved learning model transition plan.

Next steps: facilities planning for classroom setup, bus transportation coordination, meal planning to accommodate extra deliveries to the classrooms, survey preparation to determine how many students will be returning, and staffing requirements.

Some of the MDE/MDH guidance has changed due to the Regional Support Team (RST) phone call yesterday, Wednesday, January 6. Confirmed that grades 5-12 can operate as a separate building if divisions can operate separate from each other.

Now shields are strongly recommended, not required. Masks are required for indoor PE and MSHSL sports. On site Covid-19 testing information, which will begin on January 25, has been sent out to staff.

Lower School is planning for the rollout of in-person learning, facilities/classrooms are being staged and bus transportation is being coordinated.

There was discussion with RST if we could more aggressively get more students into the building, more than the three grades at a time, if the grades could isolate and separate from each other. RST has communicated that they are allowing schools to assume more risk but don't want school to go back and forth between learning models.

There appears to be more concern about the mental health/concerns that are now affecting students and as well as the learning loss that is occurring. We are investigating creative solutions to accelerate student reentry to the classroom.

C. Westlund explained the revised quarantine options available to students/families and employees.

Questions that are still open:

- Lunch time - are students required to be 6' apart during this time? Can they eat in the cafeteria 3' apart?

- We can bring more than 3 grades if they separate/isolate – what does that look like? We need clarification on what this means? Separate entrances but what does that mean for our common areas: gym, atrium, cafeteria, etc. Will students have to stay in their wing? What does isolate mean?
- How does work with staffing because our staff overlap grades?

N. Donnay expressed thanks to the teachers, EAs, DL staff who are working with students who are currently coming into the building.

Case rate data is no longer the sole factor in evaluating learning model transitions.

In considering opening up additional grades, there is need to evaluate which are the next best grades should be. What are the ways we can do this that meets the needs of the kids? The Covid Response Team will discuss which grades should be considered next for an accelerated return to the classroom.

Next board meeting is Tuesday, January 26 – the Covid Response Team and the Return to School board committee will work together to bring to the board a strong recommendation for an aggressive plan to bring back additional grades.

There was further discussion.

Motion to approve the following – “In compliance with the updated MN Safe Learning Plan, I make a motion to divert from the board approved learning model transition plan and transition K-4 to in person model with grades K-2 beginning Monday, January 25 and grades 3-4 beginning Monday, February 8. In addition, I designate Wednesday, January 20 through Friday, January 22 will be designated learning transition days for Lower School staff and students.”

Second: N. Donnay

There was discussion.

K Denzer amended the motion to include that Lower School will be in-person five days a week.

Second: R. Hajlo

Approved: All

There was further discussion regarding making changes to the current Learning Model Transition Plan that has been board approved. A. Melendres will take a lead on drafting this with input from the Covid Response Team along with the Return to School board committee to bring to the board for the January 26 meeting.

Adjourn Meeting

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 pm: A. Melendres

Second: K. Denzer

Approved: All

Submitted by S. Peterson, St. Croix Preparatory Academy

