

Reopening Task Force Meeting
11/23/20

Student Concerns Regarding Covid - Abby Walsh, Alexa Grante, Peter McTague

- Concerned about being in school after holidays
- Community transmission concerns
- Review of number of cases from March through present
- DHHS Transition Decision Matrix
- School impact - staffing; lack of subs; area schools closed therefore teachers need to work remotely to care for their own children
- Increase in anxiety; students want to feel safe
- Traveling and the holidays - DHHS and governor are discouraging travel; families will travel regardless of what school does; AP students are concerned about missing classes; influx of college students coming home; trying to prevent cases
- Petition
- Hoping to be proactive in order to prevent a longer
- Please look at that petition responses
- Questions:
 - What is it about feeling unsafe? We can't rely on others to make the same decisions we make; student who was supposed to be quarantining was in his parking lot; worried about getting in; worried about spreading it;
 - Is the proposal for just HS or all three schools? Just HS; or HS and MS; not elementary because of childcare
 - Proposal: 5 days after Thanksgiving break;
 - Staffing is a concern at MS/HS - hard to get subs

Updates:

- 4x1 recommendations
- Many emails of thanks and support
- Principals - send remote Friday schedules to families

Holiday Travel:

- DHHS recommendation is to stay in school; decision making matrix
- School transmission rates are lower
- Student and staff concerns are valid too
- Staffing is our biggest concern
- CDC does not recommend short term closure; 8 weeks minimum to flatten the curve
- Anxiety and fear is valid too
- Concern re: whether people will report travel and do the required quarantining; will additional time actually make students and staff safer
- 109 people signed the petition; not all Epping students or residents (ex. From Ontario, Illinois)
- Jordeanne - can we be more flexible with students to get the work? Some teachers added remote options; everyday you have not idea who will be here and who won't

- Sarah W - it's a lot of work to ask teachers to do when families who chose to travel against the DHHS guidance
- Heather Clark - different situation when it is a choice; we have to count on people to do the right thing
- Alexis - don't the kids all deserve the same level of education
- Abby - kids traveling is the main concern, but also their family is going to come to them
- Alexis - some students choose to go remote because they feel unsafe
- Bill - we are limited by our resources; finances are a consideration, but not the most important one
- Semester deadlines are important for making the courses work
- Peter: At what point are there too many remote students
- We need to consider where the safe places are for students
- Process: if committee wants to make a recommendation, we would need to have an emergency board meeting; board discusses and decides; this would set an expectation for every break after this
- Peter: we have no way of knowing what the situation will be at different breaks; look at case by case
- Melanie - contact tracing may be reduced; remote instruction does impact learning
- Bill - MS is averaging 85% attendance in-person; we have been proactive every step of the way (following DHHS and CDC guidelines); encouraging travel is adding to the problem; childcare issues - new cohorts are created;
- Peter - Dr. Chan and DHHS charts would recommend remote; transmission within a school facility; student absenteeism rate
- Sarah - the criteria is that we would close with a significant outbreak; concern about staffing week after vacation (HS), especially special education department
- Heather Clark - should we reinstate some of the stricter guidelines that were in place at the start of the year;
- Peter - we are a small school and cannot always socially distance; safer to be fully remote
- Not sure if keeping us out of school keeps us in school longer
- Does this committee make a recommendation to close the week after Thanksgiving:
- Bill does not feel that this is an emergency and does not feel like this is in his purview to change the calendar
- Heather Clark - board will unlikely support this at an emergency meeting
- The committee may consider it again for next vacation

Staffing:

- Most likely if we close it will be due to staffing issues
- HS in particular is experiencing staffing issues; Brian covered three classes and a flex block today
- Not enough substitutes
- Trying to support staff, but can't provide coverage
- FFCRA $\frac{2}{3}$ pay; runs out at the end of December
- We have made arrangements to benefit district and staff member when possible

- Other districts have not been as flexible
- Staff members are less comfortable with bringing their child in if we provide care
- For staff it feels like a lose-lose situation
- Newmarket closing two weeks after Thanksgiving and Christmas - staff childcare issues
- Sean - maybe we should consider closing after vacation as suggested by students
- May need to emergency close according to each building's needs; age of students and readiness impact decisions
- Sarah - logical solution for hs is to go remote after Thanksgiving; potentially a safety issue; front office short staffed week after Thanksgiving?
- Starting with many out at hs week after Thanksgiving
- Keep in mind remote schedule impacts SST students - times conflict with the schedule shared; individual teachers will need to work with students
- Parents need to know exact schedule and expectations
- Concern re: staff who may travel and try to use sick days; Covid days are for quarantine (because you are at risk)

Next Meeting: Monday, December 7th 3:30 - 5:30