

NOVEMBER 23, 2020

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
OF SOUTH LYON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
DISTRICT #63-240 COUNTIES OF
OAKLAND, LIVINGSTON AND WASHTENAW

CALL TO ORDER

President Hanshaw called the November 23, 2020 special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Anthony Abbate, Randy Clark, Carrie Hanshaw, Eric Kennedy, Bridgett McDowell, Jennifer Urtel

Absent: Craig Dashner

President Hanshaw noted that Mr. Dashner was unable to attend the meeting this evening. She also welcomed Ms. McDowell to the meeting. She explained that Ms. McDowell won the partial seat on the Board in the November 3 election. She is taking over for Mr. Schwegler who won a 6-year term in the November 3 election. Mr. Schwegler will start his new term as of January 1, 2021.

Administration Present: Steven Archibald, Superintendent
Lisa Kudwa, Assistant Superintendent
Stacy Witt, Assistant Superintendent

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Hanshaw offered an opportunity for public comments. The following comments were received and read by President Hanshaw and Mr. Abbate.

- *Katie Garielli* believes that it is irresponsible to have our students return for two weeks before break. Elementary students thrive off of routine and structure, and this plan is the complete opposite. Not to mention the current state of our community with the rising COVID cases. She asked the Board to help our little ones by providing consistency and have them home until January for their education and their safety.
- *Jessica Wood* stated that if elementary goes to fully virtual, there needs to be more focus on writing (with pencil and paper), synchronous specials, social studies and science. These kids are losing their ability to print/write by having to type all the time, and asynchronous specials with just "office hours" accomplishes nothing. They are not learning from those sessions.
- *Jessica Garnick* would like to understand if the district or school board has a plan for K-5 students who miss an extraordinary amount of school/instruction due to having cold/flu symptoms that require a 14 day quarantine or negative COVID test that takes 2-3 days to receive results from. She recently went through this with her child. Her teacher uploaded the assignments that she missed, but there were no lessons to show how the work was to be done, requiring at home parental instruction.
- *Matthew Berry* thanked the Board for taking the time to consider what is best for the students, parents and educators involved. He asked the Board to make the right decision to keep his children in person, where they are developing incredibly because they are getting what they need. They do not get what they need at home in front of a screen. In person is the appropriate choice for elementary students.

- *Laurie Louis* does not believe that elementary schools should be in person December 7 – 18. The lack of concern and regard for the health/safety of staff and kids is evident when the Board voted against the superintendent's recommendation and said that there was no harm to send elementary kids to school. She asked the Board to show their concern and care for us as you do secondary schools and reconsider your decision.
- *Lisa Silverson* encouraged the Board to keep the students in person the two weeks prior to winter break. She, along with many parents are greatly concerned about the educational, social and emotional stresses involved with remote learning. There is a significant improvement in all areas when the students attend in person.
- *Amy Alexander* supports the superintendent's recommendation for elementary to go remote. The best place is in school however structure and routine are best. The data shows the numbers are higher than in March. She asked the Board to have faith in the staff and administration. Our kids need their teachers healthy and available to answer questions.
- *Jason Scott* was scheduled to call in but was unavailable. Ms. Hanshaw read his comment. She stated that the Board has already made their decision. It was a reasonable compromise. Don't go back on your decision. Strengthen your resolve. Don't continue to flip flop with the children and families in South Lyon.
- *Kelly Wray* stated the Board of Education approved a revised mode of instruction for PK-12 at the November 16 board meeting. Since November 16, there has been no additional/new scientific evidence that indicates that elementary students should not be in person. Continually changing the schedule and re-voting on an issue is not the best way to service our students.
- *Katie Bell* called in and shared the teacher's perspectives of safety and in-person learning. She thanked Mr. Archibald and administration.
- *Alli Hingst* indicated that he loves having his two young children in person where they thrive, but not at the cost of their safety. These young kids need structure. The flip-flopping plan of in person then remote is much harder on their ability to learn than switching to remote for a few weeks where they can adapt to a new schedule. Please follow the lead of so many other districts and go remote.
- *Andrew Schimmoeller* has a son in general education who receives special education services. His son thrives on the structure and special education services provided. Please allow the self-contained rooms at Hardy to remain open for face-to-face learning. This allows the most at-risk learners to continue to receive much needed support.
- *Lynn Millward* called in and strongly urged the Board to reconsider the decision reached last week and make the move to remote instruction for elementary classrooms through January 8, 2021.
- *Krista Santana* asked the Board to keep our district safe. In-person learning is best, but it is widely accepted that it is difficult for students/staff to learn and teach. Please reconsider and vote to continue remote instruction for K-5 through January 8.

- *Shelby Ludke* stated that she had faith that the School Board would make decisions based on data and science, not emotions or politics. She hoped that the Board will consider those in our community who are most at-risk. She believes there should be a pause and return to in-person learning when community transmission levels are reduced to safe levels.
- *Leah Young* stated that one of her children needs in-person learning and limited virtual lessons to thrive. That is why she chose hybrid learning. It is time for our School Board to lead by example. You've made a plan. Please stick to it.
- *Stephanie Andrews* called in and discussed her opinion on voting against the recommendations outlined by the Central Office Administration.
- *Sarah Hamilton* stated that it is embarrassing the lack of consistency South Lyon provides for its families. For the School Board to go against the recommendation last week to enact a confusing and last-minute plan, only to retract it this week shows utter lack of unity and clear thinking needed to run a school district.
- *Jennifer Kraft* indicated that her son is in 3rd grade and during remoted school, she quickly discovered that his academic challenges were highlighted significantly. It was highly challenging to keep up with all the educational support he needed because she and her husband work full time. Since being back in person, he has been thriving academically. I pray you see the immeasurable value in keeping the younger kids in person – far outweighing any health risks.
- *Kim Bezas* stated that the VLP program is the best decision she made for her children this year. Their teachers are fully engaged and able to provide more one-on-one learning than they ever did in the classroom. In VLP, teachers can utilize breakout rooms and complete a learning lesson with minimal disruptions.
- *Allison Ritter* indicated that the disparity of modes of education district to district is creating educational inequality. If we deny young learners' face-to-face education, South Lyon kids will fall behind as Novi, Northville, Brighton etc. stay open. Give our kids an edge – keep them first.
- *Jill Manoogian* stated that any parents who signed up for in person want whatever they can get, so the back and forth is ok with her. Are we looking at what Brighton/Novi/Howell are doing? Can we just be off the month of December and add two weeks into summer. Teachers should be considered essential within our community and stay open. Let parents make the choice.
- *Marissa Ardner* was very concerned about virtual learning for her four-year old twins. She was thrilled when they could go to ECC for school, speech and social development. They are thriving in person. Thank you for the energy you have put into these decisions.
- *Erin Cottongim* stated that she decided to go with VLP to try to create a routine that was consistent and safe for her family. She has been very impressed by how this year has gone in VLP!

- *Krista Woodman* stated that when she signed up for In-Person Learning, she thought our School Board and administration would know when it was no longer safe to be in the classroom and when to make the tough call to move back to remote. It is no longer safe. We want in-person learning, but only when it is safe for all. Coming back to school those two weeks in December puts every student and staff member at risk, as well as family members they live with. She asked the Board to vote to move to remote until January as recommended.
- *Alice Gesek* understood that face to face came with the possibility of quarantines here and there. Changing the plans again will take away the only outlet that mildly resembles the childhood our kids knew before this pandemic. Stay calm and carry on. Stick to the plan. Keep kids in school.
- *David Ritter* stated that education and medical experts say young kids need the classroom. It is the safest place physically, mentally and emotionally. Science proves that kids are not mass spreaders. Stay the course.
- *Jeff Riggan* was scheduled to call in but was not available. Mr. Abbate read his comment. He does not understand the logic of now switching to fully remote through mid-January when less than a week ago, there was already a change and compromise made to allow for remote during the first weeks of December and January. Why are the two weeks of in-person being taken away in December? Little kids need to be in school in person. What changed in three days?
- *Amanda Mathews* is frustrated to hear that the Board may revise the elementary plan again. Consistency is in the classroom. Children are actually learning as opposed to online instruction. Let the kids finish till Christmas and then reassess.
- *Keri Monstrola* stated that as an elementary teacher, she believes that consistency is key for student success. She does not feel the current plan is the best for student success. With three elementary schools having to go completely remote, she feels it is time to take the recommendation from administration to keep the kids remote through January.
- *Anthony Santana* is disappointed in the haphazard manner in which these decisions are being made. Direction has changed on a day-to-day basis, but learning paths were closed prematurely and have not been made available again. Please allow us to choose the best mode of learning for our child given current information. One size does not fit all.
- *Linda Gorman* wants the Board to keep element schools in face-to-face instruction. If staffing is the issue, what will be different in January? COVID will still be around even if there is a vaccine. What proactive steps is the administration taking to combat staffing issues? She feels this year is basically a loss if we don't remain face to face.
- *Dianne Zak* sent the Board an email with COVID Transparency Reports. She suggested the school communities distinguish if the positive COVID cases are staff or students.
- *Mackenzie Purcell* indicated that she watched last Monday's meeting for over two hours to see and understand the discussion for our children. I feel like there is no right answer. She felt the Board made a great compromise for the families who are choosing to do in person learning. Please consider voting for the plan you already have in place.

- *Lisa Becker* stated that now is not the time to come up with a compromise. Now is the time to keep our staff and children safe by staying remote. Our teachers don't deserve to have their lives put at risk any more than they are now.
- *Alexis Crossmann* would like to know how SLCS plans to account for missed instructional time for hybrid students when compared to VLP students. She did not select it with any intention or implication that we would be missing more instructional time compared to VLP.
- *Michael Rzyzi* asked what has changed in the last week that requires a change in elementary school? How many positive cases are there for the little kids? What are you trying to achieve by making the young ones go virtual?
- *Joseph Keimig* stated that face to face is best for elementary children. His son is struggling with the virtual learning. School is and always has been essential.
- *Elizabeth Douglass* would like to leave JK-5 with in-person instruction. Please consider the emotional and social impacts of eliminating this option in your decision process. The Governor's position is to leave them with in-person instruction. The numbers will never be perfect or safe for everyone. There is virtual for those who are not comfortable. Those of us that send our kids in accept the risk and liability of this choice.
- *Jenn Gundersen*, a principal of an early childhood facility has remained open since June. They deal with struggles related to the virus daily...closures, staffing, contact tracing, etc. What will be different in January? What will you do to ensure our kids at ALL levels can be in person? We are failing our kids and have to find a way to make in person work for them.
- *Matt Sebastian* stated that no major changes have been made since the recommendation one week ago. After your decision the CDD advocated for in-person learning, then retracted their recommendation. They did not argue against in-person learning. Rather, they acknowledged a fact we already knew – leaving the house increases the chances of contracting the virus, but wearing a mask mitigates that risk.
- *Angela Duprey* applauds the efforts of the Board last week at listening to the needs of our district and arriving at a compromise. Please stay the course. Elementary students need in-person learning as much as possible. Time keeps moving, and kids keep falling further behind. The missed curriculum from the spring is gone. Remote learning leads to further deficits that she fears will never be made up. The Board has to do better!
- *Dane Jackson* is submitting a comment tonight in support of VLP. We couldn't be happier. The teachers involved with VLP are working hard and don't get the credit they deserve. My child is excelling with the support of her teachers and peers.
- *Patrick Lindstrom* feels that in-person learning is a much better education. He thinks our school, staff and students have done a great job in making this a safe and far better learning experience than if his son was at home. I hope and pray there are enough of you on the School Board to do the right thing and let our kids continue to attend in-person learning.

- *Steve McClain* stated a legitimate compromise was reached at last week's meeting. Do what you want tonight, but in the future, please save us from any sanctimonious propaganda advertising South Lyon as a "Kids First" district, when it is clearly anything but. Perhaps a FOIA inquiry from Sue Bromley of Hometown Life would shed more light on the activities of the past seven days.
- *Matt Blazok* called in person and reiterated that the School Board can't see eye to eye. The safest place for kids is in school. Kids mentally need in person learning. The Board needs to stick to a plan and keep consistency. Get kids back in school.
- *Kerry Stone* asks why is it that we are not able to put practices in place that would allow our schools to stay open like other schools have done. She also asked why was it that rumor was shut down the night before kids are supposed to be in school with no appropriate notice for parents to include even a skyward text or phone call?
- *Kathryn Wells* asked if parents are going to be able to offer comments once the superintendent has reviewed the rationale for the change in strategy? The process seems a bit backwards at this point.
- *Patrick Maguire* asked if the Board could please explain what data or science, they are using to make these decisions? We all want our kids in school, but the science shows it simply is not safe right now. Is the Board willing to use a decision-making model based on something other than appeasing the loudest parents?
- *Jimmie Miller* asked how many second-grade students in our district are actually going to be able to pass the minimum state and federal guidelines for education? My kid had trouble spelling pineapple on his quiz just a week ago.
- *Ashlee Harvey* stated that we all know how important in-person instruction is for our kids. Families should be responsible during the holidays. The schools are doing a good job at mitigating the spread by doing the daily screening questions. These kids should be in school. Not every child has a stay at home mom that can help them during the day and for some kids, school is their safe place.
- *Craig Skalski* asked what the criteria is to return to face-to-face learning for elementary and middle school students? He is concerned that there has been no discussion on what criteria to return in January. Has the Board considered pushing out the academic calendar into the summer with the availability of a vaccine coming in the first half of 2021? Virtual learning is not education at the lower elementary grades. He is concerned his kids will be behind in their learning and development if we continue with virtual.
- *Jill Tanason* urged the Board to please take the children's mental health into consideration. Her 8-year-old was actually severely depressed when school remained remote. She should not be seeking therapy for a child that young who is and always has been otherwise a happy child due to this. These children especially need socialization.
- *Kim Craighead* thanked the Board for all they do for our community. I urge you to visit the virtual learning platforms. Not only is online learning completely ineffective, but it is confusing and frustrating to the kids. It is also frustrating when the computers the district issued, don't work. Self-contained classrooms at minimum should be opened to general education special education students as well. She invited the Board to her home to watch how ineffective remote learning is.

- *Gina Glaszek* stated that as a special needs parent, she is heartbroken that her son will likely have in-person learning taken away again. She asked the Board if they would address special education if they switch back to remote. Are there any options they can pursue for these students? Let's think outside of the box.
- *Jill Marie* shared that she is in disbelief that this is even a discussion. This is a global pandemic. Teachers are not daycare providers. Elementary teachers are not disposable. We deserve equity too. It is not fair that high school teachers can have their health and safety protected, and we do not. Please open your eyes to see that you should be protecting your employees. You have the power to not put our health at risk.
- *JoAnne Whitney* stated that remote instruction has not worked for her daughter. It is impossible for the staff to meet her legally mandated 504 accommodations and her academic progress was significantly impacted. They have reviewed her plan twice already this year to attempt to sort things out. Since being in the classroom, even with the extended "interruptions" she is doing much better. Virtual does not work. Please keep these kids face to face.
- *Brad Halberstadt* spoke in person that this virtual learning is a joke. His child is not learning without incredible help by either his wife or himself. Assignments are given, but the actual teaching is shared way too much by unpaid parents. We have jobs, and they are suffering. Our students don't learn unless we help greatly!
- *Rebecca Meyn* wanted to say THANK YOU to all the SLCS School Board, teachers and staff. They are a VLP family and are beyond thankful and happy with how VLP is going. The teachers are amazing, her girls are thriving, and they are all safe. Thank you to every single person in the district that has made this possible for my girls.
- *Steve Bee* asked the Board to think about what is best for students and school staff right now, not about the parents. No parent wants to do online learning with their children every day. However, the alternative is dangerous and potentially deadly. Staff and students are the priority. Governor Whitmer said that each district needs to determine what is best for the district. Within three weeks, multiple classrooms and schools were shut down. It is not safe for our district regardless of other districts.
- *Amanda Levenberg* asked the Board to consider keeping self-contained special needs classrooms in person. Her daughter won't sit at a computer to learn. This time is extremely difficult for us.
- *Loni Pryor* wrote in to be a voice for the self-contained classrooms at Hardy. Imagine being a special needs child, and not having your words (aka nonverbal). Then imagine being told you have to do all of your learning through a Google meet. That is her daughter. Her IEP that is legally afforded to her cannot be met in a virtual environment. She asked the Board to please consider allowing the self-contained classrooms to continue in person.
- *Kristin Vaughn* asked the Board to keep our children in school. Her kindergartner loves going to in-person school. He is so happy playing with other children and learning in the classroom. Virtual days are full of tears and hating school. Please consider the children!

- *Michelle Fras* agrees that teachers are essential workers. However, we do not have the level of PPE and disinfecting standards that hospitals have. Teachers are doing the best in both in-person and remote. Simply put...WE ARE AT RISK.
- *Mike Davis* thinks it is important to remember that the customers the Board serve are the parents. The product you provide is our child's education. The School Board needs to ask is your first responsibility to the public or to the teachers? Each of you are private citizens and know that once a decision, like fully virtual for a month is made, it can be next to impossible to undo. Think two weeks to flatten the curve. Also reading comments from VLP parents is nothing more than propaganda for this hearing.

REVIEW OF ELEMENTARY MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Mr. Archibald started with a presentation which provided background information. He noted that since the November 16 board meeting this past Monday, he received numerous emails and phone calls from community members as I'm sure the Board have as well. Some people have expressed support for the decision made last week to amend the administration's recommendation regarding in-person virtual instruction, while others have expressed disappointment.

While the points that were brought forward last week are still valid, Administration is providing the Board and community members with additional information and rationale regarding the recommendation to move to remote learning for our elementary students. The additional information centers around three main points:

- Incubation period following Thanksgiving
- Importance of consistency and routines for elementary age learners
- System impact on our instructional program.

Mr. Archibald provided a quick overview of this evening's presentation. Mr. Archibald will review the modes of instruction both current and the proposed change from this evening (*12/7 – 12/18 Remote Learning*). He will also provide updated County health data that was shared last week. Ms. Susan Toth will provide a brief update of the incubation period for COVID-19 specifics with regard to the Thanksgiving holiday, and Ms. Lisa Kudwa will share the importance of consistency and routines at the elementary level and again our system impact on the continuity and integrity of the instructional program.

The PowerPoint presentation can be found on the district website under Board of Education, 2020-21 Agendas and Minutes, December 7, 2020 regular meeting agenda.

Mr. Archibald summarized his recommendation to the Board. It is the recommendation of administration to provide the revision of the mode of instruction for the Elementary level JK – 5 an additional two weeks (December 7 – 18) to remote learning and again mirroring the secondary program. We would continue to January 8, 2021 with a possible return on or after January 11, 2021. Programs that serve students with additional needs will be prioritized for an early return to in-person instruction as we have done previously.

The meeting opened up to Board discussion or questions.

Moved by Mr. Kennedy, supported by Mr. Abbate to approve the recommendation as presented.

- *Ms. McDowell* asked administration to speak to what would cause or trigger a school to shut down.

- *Mr. Archibald responded explaining that it is simply operational. One student case and the number of staff impacted poses a significant challenge to being able to maintain that building for the full 14-day period. We made the decision to move the building to remote.*

Another was a high number of combination of staff in quarantine as well as students in quarantine and a high number of student absences that are COVID related. That is probably the case in two of our building closures.

- *Ms. McDowell questioned what happens when a school that is open and the teacher is sick and there isn't a substitute teacher to fill in?*
- *Mr. Archibald indicated that if the class is still in person, we may have a guest teacher. If a guest teacher is not available, then it will be another teacher, administrator or staff member who is otherwise unassigned and leaving their current responsibilities in order to fill in. Oftentimes at the elementary level it would take a number of individuals throughout the course of the day with the students in person.*
- *Ms. Kudwa added that it may be a mix of different staff members going in throughout chunks of the day to cover that classroom. We've had building principals and support staff covering classrooms, but it does mean then whatever other services they would be providing during that time are not able to be covered. It does impact us when we can't move enough people in to cover classrooms. So, at the end of last week and the beginning of this week, we've had our secondary buildings closed, but that has not solved our issue of having enough staff coverage at the elementary level.*
- *Ms. McDowell asked to clarify what a support staff member is.*
- *Ms. Kudwa explained that they would try to get someone who is a teacher certified first for the majority of the day. That would be their first piece. A literacy interventionist or a resource room staff member could be covering for 20 minutes or 15 minutes who is not teacher certified.*
- *Mr. Clark commented that the Board as a whole put a considerable amount of deliberation and a lot of very well thought out communication between themselves and the administration and he thought they laid out a plan that was doable. The Board discussed the fact that this wasn't going to be easy, but they hoped that our leadership team and our building leaders could rise to the challenge. It appears that it is not the case. He is extremely frustrated because he thinks we are hanging these parents and students out again with the prospect that what is best for the student doesn't take precedent. He is not in favor of changing our plan that we voted on last Monday.*
- *Mr. Abbate gave Ms. Urtel credit again for listening to everything they said and distilling that down to something that made sense. He has the utmost respect for her, and he appreciates the contributions she put in to do that. A lot of people asked in email and a lot of people talked tonight about what changed over the course of the week. It is a fair question. According to his perspective, he was very conflicted in the last meeting and said as much. This week was messy for our district and the full impact of that needs to be outlined. We flipped four classes in three different buildings remote for the course of the week. This is all after we voted to stay in. That is dozens of kids that are out of an in-person setting because of needing to quarantine or because they had to have their class flipped because of a case. We had multiple staff members in multiple buildings that had to go out for quarantine or came up positive. We had students that were quarantined from buses. Last week he was hopeful that ECC wouldn't be affected. They got a notice tonight that there is a case that they are probably tracing now.*

In reality there is no building who is going to avoid this. As much as the Board had good intentions to try to find some kind of middle ground. In light of all that he saw this week, it was his opinion they made a mistake in the direction that they took. Pretty much all of Oakland County is out except for us, and Novi and they are able to get their class sizes down lower than ours. He thinks it is time to follow the recommendation of administration to keep people safe.

- *Ms. McDowell* stated that administration is telling the Board what they need and are saying it loudly and clearly after hearing from those employed by our district. She doesn't understand why this is even a question. They knew it would happen back in August, September and October. Now it is late November and it is happening. The community spread in our area is out of control and the people who carry out board policies are again for the second week in a row asking and pleading for our support that you've promised to give for months. Our primary obligation as she understands it as a 1st day board member is that we ensure that student needs are met. Our students need to have a safe and functional learning environment that allows them to access the curriculum. Our students need to know that we care about the health and safety of each child and adult in our school system. Our students need us to accept Mr. Archibald's plan and keep our students and staff safer. Our students need us to recognize that just because some groups are louder and more persistent, it doesn't make them right. Our Board needs to do the job that many in our community won't. We need to prevent families from knowingly sending kids to school sick. We need to create a low-key quarantine for some families who are going to gather in large groups in a few days. We need to be the adults who are going to keep our students and staff safer and healthier. We all want our children in school, but more importantly I want our kids, principals, students, teachers, janitors, school secretaries, nurses and social workers to come back next year too. As an educator, I am going to stand in solidarity with my fellow educators and I fully support Mr. Archibald's plan that was presented.
- *Ms. Urtel* stated that she is extraordinarily conflicted. She would love for our students to stay in person. She thinks it is important and necessary and needed, but this last week after receiving multiple emails of suspected positive cases with a need for quarantine she may change her mind. There was an instance where not a classroom had to go into quarantine, but the student was around close contact with 10 students on a bus. So those 10 students who were in different classrooms also have to quarantine. Because those 10 students were in quarantine, but their specific classroom was not, they did not get instruction except on the remote day which means four of the five days that week those students did not get instruction due to the fact that they were not in school. The elementary teachers are not online during in-person instruction so they can't access or be in that class during that time. They missed a significant amount of instruction time. She's unsure even to this moment which way she wants to vote tonight because she thinks we need to be in person, but she also understands the issues they have with being in person. She wanted everyone to know that multiple emails they have gotten from families, staff and teachers and even some individual emails they've received from teachers that they may have had in the past. She's read them all. It is really difficult because they are literally split down the middle in terms of our community. They have a significant amount of staff who want to be in person. They understand the challenge, but they also have a significant amount of staff that would rather be remote so they can give a consistent daily education to their students. She really hopes that whatever decision this Board comes to that everybody understands that what they are trying to do is difficult, and they are trying to make the best decision for everybody.

- *Mr. Kennedy* agrees with what Ms. McDowell said that they are going to make a not popular decision, but I don't think what they are charged to do is a popularity contest. They are not here to be liked or disliked and whatever decision they make, some folks are going to like it, and some will not like it. They could debate this infinitum and read hundreds of more emails which they have deliberated, considered and reflected on them. This is not a 'my way or the highway'. This is not an 'I'm right and you're wrong' because it doesn't apply. It is the mindset they have to get out of. Mr. Scott in his comment asked what kind of message they are sending. The message that he is sending is that he doesn't think they got it right last week. They tried to compromise and find a middle ground and is not confident that it worked, and he is not confident that it will work. He doesn't think there is a whole lot that they can say that will change a lot of our community's mind as to what they want us to do. In the back of our minds, we know what we need to do. To keep our kids as safe as we can as a district and as a community, he will echo what Ms. Urtel said about kids coming to school sick. The transmissions are happening in our district and the Board needs to do everything they can to keep them safe.
- *Ms. Hanshaw* stated that since March they have learned that data and direction constantly changes. You can find data, an expert or another local community to support either side of this argument. The bottom line is that the mission in our district reads...In support of our community the mission of South Lyon Community Schools is to provide the highest quality educational process so that all students can excel as individuals and become productive and contributing members of society. The Superintendent and the administrative team who we hired as experts have come to them again saying that they truly feel that the best educational process is to put the kids back in remote. They as board members are in charge of giving the superintendent a direction. Our direction was to provide an education and safety for our students and staff, and this is what they are recommending. They are well aware that we all want kids in the buildings as quickly as possible. They know that. They have heard that loud and clear. She is very confident they will do their very best to bring kids back into the buildings when they feel it is safe. At this point, she does agree that even though they tried hard to come up with a good compromise on Monday, the data shows that the numbers are going in the wrong direction, and our team is telling us that they do not feel it is a good educational process, and she thinks the Board needs to listen to them.
- *Ms. Urtel* had a question about the self-contained special needs, special education kids. Some of these kids are non-verbal and would have a significant issue with online learning. If the Board puts the Elementary in remote, is there the ability, because we will have a smaller, overall building population, to have those children be able to attend school so that their needs could be met a little bit more easily for the kids and their families.
- *Ms. Toth* responded that we want to have our students with special needs from our complex classes back in person as quickly as possible. Each particular classroom is unique in its own way. Some classes are currently in quarantine themselves. She will have to look at each classroom specifically. She has been working with our County nurses to give more training to the staff to make sure there is extra distancing and making sure that they are limiting that. They need to take a look case-by-case classroom by classroom what that looks like, but definitely you've heard from our teachers they would like to have the students in person as well.

- *Ms. Urtel* asked if the district can look at that as its own sort of day by day, week by week decision as opposed to having them clumped into the general. She asked if the vote does go to full remote for the JK – 5 programs, that two weeks before Christmas, is there the ability to have those students attend if there is the ability for those students to come in. Can we try to get them the extra support in some way that can definitely be part of the plan?
- *Mr. Archibald* added that the recommendation that they would be making tonight would be that programs that serve students with additional needs to our self-contained classrooms would be prioritized for early return. The way it is worded would allow us that latitude to do something different with those students very much like we did in the fall.

Roll Call: Ms. Urtel–yes (but conflicted), Ms. Hanshaw–yes, Mr. Kennedy–yes, Mr. Abbate–yes, Ms. McDowell–yes, Mr. Clark–no. Motion carries 5 – 1.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Hanshaw offered a second opportunity for public comments.

- *Erica Wilde* stated that as a parent and an RN she urged the Board to keep our young kids in person. Her 1st grader is learning to read and has already lost 1/3 of her kindergarten year and now her 1st grade year has only 20 days in person. She asked the Board to let her children get their in-person education.
- *Janine Owen* stated that in addition to students, she cares about the teachers, custodians, office staff, administrators, para pros etc. who may not fare as well if they contract COVID. Children are resilient and will survive a shutdown temporarily. We need to honor their health, their families' health and the health of our students who bring home COVID from school. She asked the Board to not allow angry, passionate rhetoric from parents to persuade you to ignore science and the responsibility you have to your staff's safety.
- *Evelyn Krieger* indicated that she is a teacher and a parent of a SLCS student. She has been nothing but thrilled with the education her student is getting in his VLP Jr. Kindergarten class. She was worried at first, but his teachers are incredible and really finding ways to make this work. Education is essential, but parents forget that teachers are not provided with the PPE that medical staff have. If parents want kids to come back in person eventually, they need to keep their kids home now.
- *Heather Connelly* states that this year is hard on everyone and unfortunately that also means that it is going to be hard on our children as well. Our kids are strong and will recover. Our older generation just might not. Every morning I sit on calls with hospitals in the area who are quickly filling up and stressed. If we cannot control the spread in our community, we put others at risk. Signing up for the hybrid model did not mean we were ok with in person with numbers this high.
- *Maria Michela* asked the Board if they have statistics on the percentage of elementary student cases that are due to sibling cases (high school or middle school students that have tested positive)? If that is prevalent, and spreading among families as opposed to school related activities, perhaps elementary students with older siblings should be made virtual while other students stay in person?
- *Greg Manello* has an eighth-grade daughter, and she has not had sexual educational training yet. Are there any resources online to help if we go virtual?

- *Adam Authier* stated that he suspects that the majority of parents pushing for in-class learning are more concerned about the free childcare our teachers provide than the educational merit of this mode of learning. Health and safety of our kids and teachers should not be second fiddle to inconveniencing parents' childcare plans. Our teachers and kids do not have HazMat PPE like doctors and nurses, and they are forced to trust that parents aren't sending their kids to school sick.
- *Krista Duffin* called in and stated that this is not about free childcare. What was said earlier that just because a group is louder doesn't make us right is very disheartening to her. She respects the need to take the most precautions to keep physical safety. She begged the Board to consider the emotional and mental effects being fully remote has on her children. Her three boys have always had a wonderful relationship with their teachers in the past. Even though one has an IEP, he has been able to thrive until March of this year. The level of bickering between three young brothers close in age has turned into a deeper level of tension and adult sadness. She has seen an improvement since they have been in the classroom and environment. It provides a positive structural learning environment. This is about giving her children the ability to thrive in remote learning. Our state government gave the exception to elementary aged kids for a reason. They need school and a positive learning environment.
- *Barb Klock* states that based on the stats and data provided in the slide show, and administration's rationale for going remote in December, how and why are you proposing re-opening schools on January 11 when that is well before your 14-day quarantine rationale? Your approach and rationale are inconsistent and is very confusing to all.
- *Jonathan Krieger* has sympathy for how difficult this decision is and the impact on parents/students to move fully virtual. While there is often an argument about COVID, there really isn't a debate. Parents know the risks, and we know people ignore those risks, and despite efforts to mitigate them, cases are on the rise. He keeps hearing the same thing from parents who favor in-person instruction. They want what they want and blame teachers for any suggestion that in person isn't safe. Until cases come down, move virtual.
- *Victor Vulaj* signed in but left no comment.
- *Michelle Gochenour* is a parent of four kids in the district. Two are at the elementary level. His youngest is in 2nd grade and on an IEP. He has a speech therapist, a reading recovery teacher and an OT teacher in addition to the normal daily required learning. He has thrived while in face to face, however during virtual learning it is a struggle. There are daily outbursts of frustration. He is not getting what he needs like he would in the classroom. How will his needs and other kids like him be addressed?
- *Barb Klock* stated that it was mentioned that 10 students who came in contact with someone who tested positive, but their classes were not quarantined. Those 10 students did not receive instruction (and there are others in a similar situation) – that's the fault of the C & I Department who don't have a plan in place to accommodate those situations. Get your act together and advocate for kids. Many parents are losing faith in the school district leadership and Board.
- *David Price* took Mr. Clark to task for questioning the administration's ability to rise to the occasion. The Board assigned Mr. Archibald with running this district. He presented a plan last week that he and his team created, and the Board swept his legs out from under him. Our building principals have worked tirelessly to make in-person learning as good as it could be. I have had personal conversations with Mr. Archibald and my principal, but none with you...where have you been?

- *Paula Tamonis* questioned how this plan will affect ECC. Can they stay in person?
- *Brad Halberstadt* questioned whether this plan indicates that special needs children can come back to in person early. COVID does not discriminate. The rules should not differ, a virus is a virus.
- *Tiffany Lawrie* stated this is a staffing problem....resolve it. Your mission is the educate not worry about the community. Fix the remote instruction, and you wouldn't see this outcry.
- *Joseph Keimig* states the percentage of community spread that you cited for last week is 70/10K residents. The math is .007%. This is clown shoes and ignoring the CDC recommendations. Masks work, right? You assume our families will not do the right thing over the holidays with no data to support this. Record mental health and suicide attempts among our youth are being ignored to kowtow to the teachers' union. He asked the Board to give parents the choice they were promised.
- *Karen Mikola* called in and stated that how do you rate safety versus education. Is one more important than the other or are they equal. It's a hard decision to make by anyone, but I just wanted to offer my own words. Who is to provide some insight? This is my last of 18 years with a child in the district. My son graduates from East this year and my daughter graduated four years ago. The risks are out there. We know that when we have kids. Go forward with an open eye, not necessarily be scared, but be informed. Now we are in an environment where we know there is a definite possibility of getting sick. Maybe you are still willing to take those risks. I know you have a tough decision as a Board but there is a question that needs to be answered. Education vs. Safety?
- *Bala Lakshmanan* states that we have appointed school administrators to come forward with recommendations based on the latest situation. A good Board will make changes based on new information and reverse a decision that was made if deemed incorrect. There is no ego in admitting a mistake. A lot of people are going to be unhappy going remote and there will be emotions all over. Safety of our students and teachers is paramount. We cannot ignore science and accept some emotional arguments.
- *Matt Blazok* asked for the name of the board member who made a comment that she is going to vote because she is standing with her fellow educators is a slap in the face to us as a community. Your vote is for the community. He stated the board member should be ashamed of how she acted in this meeting.
- *Mandy Venning* states that the community is fighting for eight in-person days in December. The Board has given extra weeks off after the holidays to allow for a cool down after suspected holiday gatherings. What is going to change between now and January 11? The district has failed our children. You have all failed our children.
- *Brad Halberstadt* stated that since he will not be able to accept job bids, he will have plenty of time to not only home school, but also to petition for lower property taxes since folks don't want to work.
- *Elizabeth Urbiel* remarked that virtual learning has been an absolute nightmare for her child. Nothing but crying, yelling and fighting. He will not be ready to move forward. Please consider making this year not count for the students.

- *JoAnne Whitney* asked the Board to address the amount of instruction time given per day. Secondary kids get three 2-hour blocks with their teachers. Elementary kids get sporadic 10-30-minute lessons. The Wednesday plan for Brummer is a morning meeting then a morning lesson of 45ish minutes, at which time they are left for independent work. 5-10-year olds working alone for 6+ hours while teachers have meetings is unacceptable. Teachers are educators first and foremost and meetings should be minimized, and instruction maximized.
- *Tami Kast* thanked Mr. Clark for standing his ground. Any parent that can afford private school is actively researching their options for the future. How many students have been pulled out of the school system this year? This will hurt South Lyon in years to come. Neighboring states are in school. The state government gave an exception to elementary, and we are disregarding that.
- *Bethany Courtney* shared that as a teacher in an elementary building, it is absolutely hear shattering to hear Mr. Clark felt that our school leaders and teachers are not rising to the occasion of in-person learning. I strongly suggest that you come into the building to witness first-hand how much these teachers/leaders are rising to the occasion. We are rising above and beyond. Please watch us do this.
- *Mike Davis* states that this meeting is a mockery. A week ago, you voted differently. Now you are changing with almost no data to support your decisions other than saying things got worse the past week. Your own charts showed that only 2 in 10,000 more people tested positive this week than last week in the community. Your job isn't to keep all students from contracting the virus, it is to mitigate risk while providing an education to our kids.
- *Kelly Muston* is a parent of 5 students in SLCS. Her two at Hardy were part of an exposure on their bus and have been quarantined. They both received packets. These cannot be done independently at their ages. Perhaps a premier sub can be assigned to a building to work with those kids. Thank you to Bridgett for your comments.
- *Lindsay Koch* stated the new board member, Bridgett should be ashamed. It is very unfortunate that the Board is failing our kids once again. Thanks to Randy Clark who has and continues to fight for our kids.

ADJOURN

Moved by Mr. Kennedy, supported by Mr. Abbate to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 p.m.

**Roll Call: Ms. McDowell–yes, Mr. Clark–yes, Ms. Urtel–yes, Mr. Abbate–yes, Mr. Kennedy–yes,
Ms. Hanshaw–yes. Motion carries 6 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted,



Anthony Abbate, Secretary
Board of Education