

The Board of Education, Downers Grove Grade School District 58, DuPage County, Illinois met for a special meeting and instructional workshop on Monday, February 22, 2021, at O'Neill Middle School. Due to the COVID-19 emergency, in-person meeting attendance was limited to 50 people and the meeting was live streamed to the public on the District 58 YouTube channel.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The President called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and announced that it was a special meeting and instructional workshop of the District 58 Board of Education. Members present: President Darren Hughes; Vice President Gregory Harris; and Members Kirat Doshi, Emily Hanus, Steve Olczyk, Jill Samonte and Tracy Weiner. Members absent: None. Also in attendance were Kevin Russell, Superintendent; Jayne Yudzentis, Assistant Superintendent for Personnel; Justin Sisul, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; James Eichmiller, Assistant Superintendent for Technology and Learning; Jessica Stewart, Assistant Superintendent for Special Services; Todd Drafall, Assistant Superintendent for Business/CSBO; Catherine Hannigan, Manager of Business Services; Kevin Barto, Director of Buildings and Grounds; Megan Hewitt, Coordinator of Community Relations; and Melissa Jerves, Board Secretary.

2. INSTRUCTIONAL WORKSHOP

Superintendent Dr. Kevin Russell began the presentation by listing the priorities that guide the administration's decision-making regarding the instructional model during the pandemic: health and safety of students and staff, on-site and in-person instruction, maintaining a robust fully remote option, and minimizing disruptions as much as possible. In particular, the commitment to safety includes maintaining the 6-foot distancing that reduces the number of close contacts to any individual who is a positive or suspected case of COVID-19, as well as continued adherence to quarantine requirements set by the health department. He noted that comparisons to other districts or private schools are not necessarily accurate. Public schools are required to offer a fully remote option and provide special education, English learner, and other interventions. District 58, compared to neighboring districts, has a very low tax base and does not have the budget capacity to hire a significant number of new staff. District 58 needs an instructional model to fit its specific needs.

Two Instructional Planning Committees, one elementary and one middle school, comprised of teachers and administrators, met four times over the past four weeks to explore ways to increase instructional time. A variety of instructional models were discussed and survey feedback was reviewed, analyzed and discussed. While survey responses indicated that many stakeholders were interested in increasing the instructional day, it became less of a priority if it means changing teachers. Rather than coming to a consensus about the best option, both

committees concluded that because no decision will be ideal for all stakeholders, they would share their positive and negative feedback about each model. Staff members Brittany Sanfillippo, Katie Hurckes and Christine Priester reviewed the options the elementary committee considered. Robyn Panico and Matt Durbala shared the options the middle school committee considered, including a block schedule and a full day. To maintain six feet distancing, the committee determined that the current A/B model must continue. Lengthening the school day is possible, but challenges for students include lack of movement, increased time on screens when remote, and the continued need for opportunities for individual help.

Dr. Russell then outlined the administration's recommendations. For grades 1-6, beginning April 7 after Spring Break, the synchronous school day will increase, taking place from 8:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m., five days per week. Students will have a break for snack, but not lunch on site. The vast majority of instruction will occur in person, and from 2-3 p.m. additional specific student supports will be provided, as well as time for asynchronous work. Fully remote students would follow the same schedule from home. Kindergarten would remain a half-day program, with times adjusted to better align with grades 1-6. The District will continue to plan for increased time in May.

This model would require reorganizing staff to accommodate the longer on-site instructional day and still maintain a fully remote option, resulting in approximately 22% of students changing homeroom teachers. The District would implement transition supports for students and staff, with opportunities for teachers to join current classes to get to know students, support for staff changing roles, facilitating movement of classrooms and teaching spaces, and collaboration with specialists. Supports for families include timely communications about class assignment and between parents and grade level teams, and connecting families with childcare providers.

Dr. Russell further recommended that for middle schools, after Spring Break, five minutes will be added to each class period, plus a 30-minute lunch. The alternating day (A/B) schedule for seventh and eighth grade students will be maintained. Far fewer staffing changes are required at the middle schools, about 40 lunch supervisors will need to be secured, and the schools will work toward increasing opportunities for students' movement during the day.

The Board discussed issues regarding teacher changes, bus scheduling, and the possibility of lengthening the school day to the greatest extent feasible in April, rather than accomplishing it in two shifts in April and May. Time is needed to adjust schedules, particularly in elementary schools and for special education interventions, staff need to be recruited and hired, and families need time to adjust childcare arrangements.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Vicky O'Boyle, Lester attendance area, commented that her experience as a teacher

in a neighboring district with a full day in-person schedule has been very positive. The current hybrid model in District 58 demands too much of students' executive functions, and we need creative solutions to get them into school full time.

Mark Larson, Lester attendance area, commented in support of full day in-person instruction.

Angelique Stacy, Lester attendance area, thanked the District for its efforts, and stated that children need more in person time for learning and socializing.

Craig Young, DGEEA President, stated that teachers recognize the undeniable benefits to more instructional time. He urged the Board to weigh the costs and benefits, and teachers will honor that decision and do their best for the students of District 58.

Dan Freyer, Lester attendance area, commented that there is no reason students cannot be in school full time and that other districts are moving to full day.

David Slocum, Lester attendance area, noted that the District has been relatively cautious with in-person learning. He strongly supports providing full day in-person learning for families who choose it.

Juliette Freyer, Lester attendance area, urged a commitment to return to full in-person learning immediately.

Katie Thomas, El Sierra attendance area, commented that the impact to student learning of changing students' schedules and teachers is too great.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

A. Return to Learn Plan 2020-21

Member Olczyk moved and Member Weiner seconded the motion to increase the elementary school day from 2.5 hours to 4.25 hours on April 7, with a start time of 8:30 and an end time of 12:45 for grades 1-6; to increase the school day on May 3 to align with a full-day program per ISBE guidelines; and to increase the middle school day from 8:30 to 1:05 to 8:30 to 2:25 while maintaining the A/B model.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES: Members Doshi, Hanus, Harris, Hughes, Olczyk, Samonte, and Weiner

NAYS: None Motion carried

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

President Hughes announced the following dates:

Wednesday, Feb. 24, 3:45 p.m. Legislative Committee

Monday, March 1, 3:45 p.m.

Parent Teacher Advisory Committee

Friday, March 5, 7 a.m.

Financial Advisory Committee

Monday, March 8, 7 p.m.

Regular Board Meeting

6. ADJOURNMENT

Member Harris moved and Member Doshi seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES: Members Doshi, Harris, Hanus, Hughes, Olczyk,
Samonte, and Weiner

NAYS: None

Motion carried

The meeting was adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Darren Hughes, President

Melissa Jerves, Secretary