



BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

July 22, 2020 School Board Special Meeting

Mr. Osborne reported Executive Sessions were held in the Large Group Instruction Room of Reynolds Jr.-Sr. High School as listed:

- Wednesday, June 24, 2020 following the Regular Monthly Meeting from 8:21 PM to 9:41 PM for personnel and legal matters and annual School Safety Report.
- Wednesday, July 15, 2020 from 7:05 PM to 9:23 PM for legal matters.

Due to Covid-19 Mitigation Orders, a limit of 25 people was put into place and live streaming was set-up for three locations within the Reynolds Jr.-Sr. High School. Administrators and the School Board gathered in the LGI where they welcomed the individual speakers. The High School Dining Room and Small Gym where other locations where live streaming of the meeting was held.

Mr. Sibeto reported prior to the start of the meeting that there were two other rooms with members of the community – one holding 25 people and the other with maybe 12-15. Mr. Sibeto stated that two other rooms were prepared in case more people attended. There were around 40 community members in two rooms, and they had a live connection and could see and hear the meeting. Their microphones were muted so they couldn't be heard. Members of the community who wished to speak were asked to come into the LGI and speak into the microphone so they could be seen, and the Board members could see them. Administrators were in the rooms in case there was a problem. If they run into a problem, they will stop and tend to the problem before the meeting moves forward. Mr. Sibeto asked everyone to try to speak slower and louder.

➤ Recognition of Visitors/Public Comment

- Mrs. Leesa Donnelly, RHS English Teacher for 24 Yrs. and Parent of a 5th Grade Student – Discussed the District's Re-opening Plan and stated that she was not alone in her viewpoints . . . "There is so much I could say, but I have tried to condense my words into some main points that are important to all parents, students, teachers, administrators, and the board. We are here right now because our number one priority is the education of our students. However, life is far from normal right now, there are no easy answers, and no one is going to be pleased with any plan that is executed because any plan is going to be very difficult for everyone. I want to make it clear that the best plan for our students to start school mentally and physically is to engage in full time remote learning.

Most would argue that remote learning is not the best educational or social option, and I would have to agree if life were how it should be right now. I would love to send my child to school. She loves school, but right now, total remote learning is the best option.

The health of students, staff, their families, and the rest of the community are at risk. We are in an area where we have experienced low risk, but that is steadily changing. People have relaxed, they have traveled, and now students will be enclosed indoors during school. There are various students, staff, and some of their family members who suffer from serious health conditions that put them at risk such as asthma, diabetes, lupus, organ transplants, and even cancer and heart troubles, and then we should factor in the health conditions that may be unknown. The numbers of cases around us are rising in areas like Pittsburgh and Ohio. In fact, we have restrictions placed on this very meeting tonight. We do not know enough about the long term effects of this virus concerning adults or children as far as how it is spread or why some immune systems cannot handle the effects. Reliable data shows different levels of antibodies in humans for different lengths of time. We do not yet know the ramifications of humans contracting this virus multiple times or of humans contracting this virus along with a flu or cold virus, which is possible because they attack cells in different ways. The aerosols carrying the virus are too small to be filtered by masks and can linger in the air for up to three hours. Most of our rooms do not have proper ventilation, and so masks may not provide much protection.

Students need consistency in life and their education to be successful. Educational consistency cannot be achieved using in person instruction right now. Students must be distanced from each other and wear masks. Teachers and students will not be able to have any kind of close contact and will not be able to read each other's facial expressions. Students cannot attend phys ed, play on the playground, go to stations in the art room to complete a project or attend assemblies. Our district has mandated

emergency drills that we must conduct each month to keep students safe, which will have to be planned much differently, and we also have to feed students without visiting the cafeteria, and students will not be able to change classes normally. School will be very different, stressful, and far from what it needs to be socially. Students and staff will have to be closely monitored and tested for any possible symptoms, so there may be many times that someone will stay home when they normally would have come to school as a trooper with a lengthy illness such as a cough. Any time someone tests positive, the domino effect will be educationally devastating. Students and teachers will have to remain at home, and anyone who had contact with them will need to be quarantined from school and their families. We have many students who already have trouble coming to school due to anxiety, and some of our students live in multigenerational homes and are raised by grandparents or other relatives. Teachers may often be out of the building because of the possibility of having the virus or actually contracting it. It will be very difficult to find coverage for multiple lengths of time and to find someone who will understand what needs to be done remotely or otherwise if a teacher becomes extremely ill. This will all be incredibly disruptive to the system. We are looking at total chaos with only a few cases of the virus, colds, and flus. There will be excessive absences, fear and stress, not to mention serious illness or possibly death.

Again, the best key to student success right now and at any time is consistency. We are a small country school, but we have accomplished a lot over the years and have a lot to be proud of. We are a pioneer school in our technology, our high test scores, our safety, our sports. Thanks to a grant that Mr. Buchman acquired for us, we now have the capability to carry through consistent and effective online learning with all of our students. Last spring, the teachers and administration, literally overnight and then within one day, had to prepare our students to learn remotely. It was difficult, confusing, and challenging to say the least. However, the teachers and administration worked together to carefully evaluate, communicate, and keep track of what we were doing and how we could improve if we were in this situation again. This time we have the proper equipment, we will train ahead of time, and we will put forth our effort to greatly improve our instruction. It may still not be the ideal educational situation, but it will be much different and much better than what students and parents experienced in the spring. We will also be able to meet the needs of our students on a consistent basis instead of all the disruption and focus upon the virus, any other illnesses, and the restrictions. It will be much easier to go cautiously forward and back to attending school in some capacity, maybe even after nine weeks, than to submerge back in school and then get into a chaotic situation and have to pull back the reins. Teachers will learn a lot more about remote learning and be much more attentive and effective if they do not have to also teach students in person at the same time they are conducting remote learning while trying to follow strict health guidelines.

There are many very difficult issues and decisions concerning education that we all must face as a result of the pandemic. Besides trying to offer the best education possible, child care is certainly an issue for many. However, when we look at the big picture, health and consistent education need to supersede any other issues we face. We are somewhat sheltered in this location, but the truth is, we are still in danger and we still don't know what the future holds. The entire American population is in chaos and are suffering in various ways, but here at Reynolds let's still try to be logical and keep our top two priorities that our children and our community remain safe while we offer consistent education remotely. We are lucky enough to have the resources, so let's use them, work together, and do the absolute best that we can."

➤ **Opportunities to Address Matters of Concern and/or Agenda Items**

1. **Mrs. Ashley Miller** - Resident/ Parent/ Fellow Educator. Mrs. Miller voiced her concerns about child care for working parents. She stated that there is no day care available and that she is on three waiting lists for day care for her two-year old. She questioned whether online learning will be the same as last spring and whether our teachers will be trained in Google Classroom. Mrs. Miller questioned whether we have Chromebooks for every child. She questioned the results of the community survey. She questioned the mental well-being of keeping kids home.
2. **Mr. Howard Solomon** – Resident/ Parent. Mr. Solomon has two children, one in each building. One child has special needs, and he had concerns about having lunch in classrooms. He stated it could be disastrous for his child and everyone around him if he/she was in one classroom all day. He had a concern for his wife at home with health issues and what his children would bring home to her. Mr. Solomon also stated that online learning last year was non-existent with parents being made to be teachers. He stated that if online learning was more structured and students could see their teachers that would be better. He would like to see interaction between students and time away from parents and siblings, but he also feared for their safety and the safety of his wife at home. He hoped things would be put into place for students with special needs and having them in a room for eight hours a day will be disastrous.
3. **Mr. Len McMuldren** – Resident/ Parent. Mr. McMuldren has three children, ages 16, 13 and 9. He stated that there is no good option, so we need to choose the best option. He said parents do not believe this will be the best option. He asked: are kids going to have classes at the same time? What will be provided technologically? Will it be structured as a scheduled environment or video-taped that kids can watch at their convenience? Will it be Zoom meetings? Will the tech department be able to assist with plan and what format are we going with? What will the impact be to kids going to Mercer County Career Center?

4. **Mr. Jason DeJulia** – Resident/ Parent. Mr. DeJulia has two children in the district and realized that half the people will be opposed. He expressed the difficulties with remote learning due to Internet issues and not having high speed Internet in his area. Mr. DeJulia stated that he and his wife had to work from home in addition to their two children doing school work. He ended up going to his office because they couldn't all log on at the same time. Mr. DeJulia mentioned Senator Michelle Brooks and rural communities' access to Hot Spots. He stated that only the Reynolds development has cable or you have to use telephone lines.
5. **Ms. Rachel Savchuk** – Resident/ Parent. Ms. Savchuk has four children and two nieces in the district. She stated that it was not a very fun experience having to work and having to do school work with children in grades K-2-3 and 5. She stated that they did the best they could, and the teachers did the best they could with what time they had to prepare. Ms. Savchuk mentioned her family's limited number of computers and Internet access issues. She stated there is one person watching six kids. She questioned whether students will have a set amount of time on computers and if Kindergarteners would be able to log on by themselves. She questioned whether there will be communication with parents because she cannot communicate at 8-9 PM, and it's not fair to expect teachers to be available that long. She expressed her concerns regarding children with learning support issues and said that computers won't work for them. She thought maybe it should be up to the parents whether some kids come to school or stay home with computers. Ms. Savchuk stated that not all parents are home to interact with kids to get their work done. Some people are working from home and working actual jobs. She suggested the hybrid option was a better option that could work for everybody.
6. **Mr. Mike Mason** – Resident/ Parent. Mr. Mason stated that there is no perfect answer. He felt that this world will always face a pandemic, and we have to be able to stay in the fight. He would rather die fighting for freedom than not to fight at all. He questioned how long we would be doing this – 3 years – 5 years? He mentioned that H1N1 had no casualties, and nothing was shut down. Mr. Mason stated that we have to give the kids a chance to have a normal life. He mentioned that there are districts going back 100% and stated if there are flare-ups or certain situations, then the kids would stay away from the general population.

Mr. Sibeto stated that the district does not have the space or the staff to bring back students every day by the state's guidelines – that's out. Last spring, the district did the best it could, but it was not very good education. Mr. Sibeto stated that this time, the district is prepared to provide each student with a device. Students in grades 2-12 will each receive a Chromebook, and in grades K-1, students will receive an iPad. Live Online Learning will include live teaching from teachers who will report to school and provide live education. The district will also address Internet connection concerns. Students attending the career center will still attend and be transported. Food services will still operate on a modified basis. IEPs and special needs accommodations will be addressed by meetings scheduled with parents. Live Online Learning – this model of instruction will last for at least the first nine-week grading period. Before the end of that time, the Board will review the situation to determine whether it will be ongoing or change.

➤ **Educational Programs/Student Activities**

- Approved Reynolds School District Health and Safety Re-opening Plan

Mr. Sibeto summarized the plan for a Live Online Learning program whereby students will follow a schedule as if they are in school. He said the district will be flexible regarding attendance and understand if kids can't get on their devices for a day or because they are at the babysitter's. The live interactive learning between the kids and the teachers will be live for the kids who can participate. For those who cannot, the classes will be recorded so that those not in attendance can log on later. The bonus for that is that for the kids who didn't understand the lesson, the students will be able to repeat it and parents can watch it, too. The start of this school year will be nothing like before. Last March, we didn't decide to do this and were not prepared. This time we are ready. If we get called out of school, we need to be prepared and will not be in the same boat.

➤ **Meeting Dates**

August 19, 2020

Reynolds School Board Regular Meeting – 6:00 PM

➤ **Public Comments**

1. **Mrs. Ashley Miller** – Resident/ Parent. Ms. Miller stated that she has been a lifelong resident of Reynolds and is an educator and knows the pressure that boards of education are under. She stated that being a parent, she is also under a lot of pressure trying to find day care now. They are full – completely full. Her only hope is that her school will enroll her son. She expressed her concern over students who have never used a Chromebook or iPad and questioned whether our teachers have been trained in Google Classroom. She compared what her school was doing and questioned whether mental wellness was considered in respect to student socialization. She questioned the responses of the parent survey and what the community had to say.

Mr. Sibeto responded that the responses were all over the place. Masks were a problem for parents. He stated that it ended up not being a valid survey because it was done before the masks and six foot social distancing order was placed.

Ms. Miller felt she was the majority. She stated difficulties teaching her own child and how many other districts are going back to school. She hoped the district looked at all of the options. Ms. Miller stated that she is on three day care waiting lists and her only other option is getting a random person off of the street to watch her child and do school work with him or enroll him in her school. Ms. Miller stated that she moved back to Reynolds so that her kids could go to school here, and it breaks her heart.

2. **Mrs. Lisa Swingle** – Resident/ Parent. Ms. Swingle stated that she feels that the kids should go back to school or do it online. She mentioned issues such as the emotional and social aspect of going to school as well as providing food. She stated that she is a nurse not an educator, and teachers are mandated reporters. Ms. Swingle mentioned that she has a special needs child, and they are not sure what they are going to do with her because no one is home to watch her full-time. Ms. Swingle also mentioned Internet access issues.