

**River Grove Elementary
Board of Directors Special Meeting
Thursday, November 19, 2020
4:30 PM - online
MINUTES**

1.0 Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 4:33pm

- Roll call vote. Members in attendance: Dan Miller, Angie Hong, Marcy Ost, Jessica Hansen, Annie Beck, Lisa Dochniak, Bre DeCorsey. Also attending: Drew Goodson, Ele Anderson.

2.0 Community Comments – no one asked to speak

3.0 COVID-19 Response and Learning Model – Drew Goodson

- 14-day case range in Washington County through Nov. 7 is 118 per 10,000 population. The initial guidance from MN Department of Health was to move to fully distant learning at 50 per 10,000. The current rate within the Stillwater School District, where our students live is actually closer to 150 / 10,000 currently.
- So far, Grove has had two students and one staff member with confirmed cases of COVID. 112 students and 13 staff have been exposed and quarantined.
- Washington County is seeing 200 new COVID cases per day and is considered an “uncontrolled outbreak.”
- Many schools are choosing to move to fully distant learning once 30% of the student population is out for COVID related reasons. Currently, 37% of Grove students are out for COVID related reasons.
- MDH notes that Grove has a unique learning environment and is doing very well to control infection rates on campus.
- Staff recommendation is to shift to fully distance learning at Thanksgiving. Concerns include: safety of staff, students, and families; ability to fully staff the school and provide the needed level of services for special education students; planning ahead to make a smooth transition before we’re forced to make an unplanned, emergency decision.
- So far, 10 families have already elected to keep their students home full-time. Some classes only had 2-5 students this week. This makes it difficult for teachers to connect with all of their students when kids are supposed to be in person and aren’t.
- Teacher meeting this week to discuss possible options. Some teachers are very concerned about safety and would like to move to distance learning immediately.

Proposed Action A

- Last Day of Hybrid Learning- Next Tuesday, November 24th
 - Keep Wednesday, November 25th as a Distance Learning Day
- Teacher/Staff Prep Days- Monday, November 30-Wednesday December 2
- On-site Childcare begins- Monday, November 30
- Full-Time Distance Learning to begin- Thursday, December 3

*Next consideration for change 2nd semester - Tuesday, January 19, 2021
(associated prep days before)

Safe Learning Plan- Special Education Services

1. River Grove will continue to provide some initial evaluation onsite, as needed to determine special ed. eligibility.
2. River Grove will provide a level of in person services, at school, to students with disabilities with the most intense needs, who are not able to make progress through distance learning only. (as long as staffing capacity will maintain)
3. River Grove will continue to provide a high level of instruction, through distance learning, to students with disabilities, in a manner in which students will continue to make progress on their goals and objectives.

Proposed Action B

- Last Day of Hybrid Learning- Next Tuesday, November 24th
 - Keep Wednesday, November 25th as a Distance Learning Day
- Teacher/Staff Prep Days- Monday, November 30-Friday, December 4
- On-site Childcare begins- Monday, November 30
- Full-Time Distance Learning to begin- Monday, December 7

*Next consideration for change 2nd semester - Tuesday, January 19, 2021
(associated prep days before)

- Teachers would prefer Option B to give them a full week to prep for the transition. Goodson is concerned about using all five days now and not having any left for a transition back to hybrid or in-person in the spring. He is also concerned about students having such a long stretch of time off with Thanksgiving and the week after.
- Dan Miller: What questions do board members have?
 3. ●.1 Beck: No teachers take this decision lightly. Two main reasons for making the recommendation: 1) Being able to staff the school adequately. Grove has tried to keep pods separate throughout the fall, but with staffing shortages will need to start having staff working with multiple groups of kids. 2) It is also a strain for teachers to work with both hybrid and fully-distance learners at the same time. That is why the school has designated distance-learning teachers.
 3. ●.2 Hansen: One of her classes only had two kids this week. It makes it very difficult when you are trying to teach the ones in-person and at home at the same time. Also concerned about paras moving between multiple groups and potentially cross-contaminating. Concerned about kids not getting a quality education under the current conditions. Would like to see longer time for teacher prep but also sees a need for prep later in the spring.
 3. ●.3 Dochniak: Has been teaching kindergarten fully distance all year in St. Paul. Has been pleasantly surprised to be able to connect with kids ok via distance. It is difficult to stay ahead of the game. At her school, many kids were attending childcare and getting some education while they were there, but now that will be closed too. The parents who responded to the survey seem to be split 50/50. Yes, families chose Grove for the outdoor setting, but it is hard to teach outdoors when it is cold and wet. Yes, private schools are staying open, but we need to make our own decision of what's best for us.
 3. ●.4 Ost: Have concerns from families about special ed services and happy to hear that those students will continue to get the services they need. Saw that the special ed staff really stepped up last spring. Currently, her child is receiving many of his special ed services remotely on his days home even though he is hybrid, purely due to scheduled conflicts.
 3. ●.5 Hong: Could we reopen Jan 1 instead of Jan 19? Jan 19 would allow a two-week quarantine time after the holidays, but it would also be nice to get kids back sooner. Drew: Department of Health has seen major spikes in COVID cases after every holiday.
 3. ●.6 Miller: Would prefer to plug along and keep the campus open until Christmas, but there are serious operational concerns and many staff expressing safety concerns. And many families are already keeping their kids home. It doesn't make sense to have teachers with only 2-3 kids at school. Then they are teaching four groups every week instead of only two, which is already hard. Teachers are already underpaid and over-extended. Would prefer to have a shorter time for planning before beginning fully distant learning.
 3. ●.7 Goodson: This is a very difficult decision and not in the best interests of the kids but there is not really anything else we can do. In an ideal world, we could offer families and teachers the choice for those that are comfortable being on campus. But Grove doesn't have the capacity to do that. He is open to

problem-solving and restructuring to try to bring some kids back to campus eventually if they are really having problems at home.

- 3.●.8 Dochniak: Could we get creative in having kids on campus? Maybe more like a daycare model where they are get instruction from their classroom teachers but are supervised by a staff person on site at the school?
 - 3.●.9 Hansen: If we are potentially thinking of a whole new approach when kids come back to school, then we should reserve more planning time for teachers on the back end and only take 3 days now.
 - 3.●.10 Miller: Biggest concern is operational. There are no more subs. We are already pulling people from everywhere. Staff have to be out for so long when they are sick due to quarantine guidelines. Would like to go with the option that has only three days for prep time to minimize the amount of time kids have no school. That would mean going with Schedule A.
 - 3.●.11 Goodson: Stillwater School District is looking at beginning distance learning on Nov. 25, but that feels too tight for us. Schedule A would have kids start distance learning on Dec. 3. Three days seems like a lot of teacher prep time but really isn't. Teachers will not be relaxing. They will have a lot of work to do.
 - 3.●.12 Hong: Would prefer three days for teacher prep time.
- Miller: Seeking a motion to move to fully distance learning via calendar option A.
 - 3.●.1 Motion by Ost.
 - 3.●.2 Question by Dochniak – are we sticking with Jan 19 as the first potential return date? Goodson: It doesn't seem practical to bring kids back before then. Dochniak – with a four-week lock-down coming statewide and our unique situation, is there a possibility the COVID numbers would change enough to allow kids to come back Jan. 4? Ost – would staff feel safe coming back that close to New Years? Or would they prefer a two week quarantine after New Years? Beck – If we make more changes to the learning model when we come back, teachers will end up having to work all through the holidays to prepare. They are already working nights and weekends. It's an unfair expectation.
 - 3.●.3 Second by Hong.
 - 3.●.4 Question from Dochniak – why are we reluctant to make this decision? Hong – it is the only decision we can make and yet it breaks my heart. This is a year full of nothing but bad decisions that have no right answer. Dochniak – no matter what, half of the parents watching this will be upset. Goodson – this is a terrible decision to make but it's out of our control.
 - 3.●.5 Roll call vote with all members voting yes.

4.0 Dan Miller adjourned the meeting at 5:28pm.