

The Board Report

Monday, October 5, 2020



Disclaimer: The Board Report is a synopsis of the Hampton Township School Board meetings and is not intended as a replacement for any official Board minutes.

~ A Tradition of Excellence ~

The Hampton Township Board of School Directors

Bryant Wesley II, Esq.
Mrs. Jill Hamlin
Ms. Denise Balason
Mr. Matt Jarrell
Mrs. Joy Midgley
Mr. Larry Vasko
Mr. Robert Shages
Mr. Greg Stein
Mrs. Trisha Webb

Board President
Board Vice President
Board Secretary/Facilities Chair
Transportation Chair
Personnel Chair
Finance Chair
Board Treasurer/Policy & Legislative Affairs Chair
Technology Chair
Student Affairs Chair

This Hampton Township Board of School Directors meeting was held at the A.W. Beattie Career Center, 9600 Babcock Blvd., Allison Park, PA. It was audio/video recorded, and some attendees participated through Zoom.

Members of Administration in Attendance

Dr. Michael Loughead
Dr. Rebecca Cunningham
Mr. Jeff Kline
Dr. Ed McKaveney
Mr. Rick Farino
Dr. Jacquelyn Removcik
Dr. Jay Thornton

Superintendent of Schools
Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Director of Administrative Services
Director of Technology
Director of Buildings and Grounds
Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
District Psychologist/Director of Student Services

Student Representatives

Molly Januck and Meghan Welch

Monday, October 5, 2020

Work Session

A video recording of the meeting can be viewed [here](#). The time within the video that each section begins is indicated below.

Opening

0:00

Mr. Wesley called the meeting to order and later announced that public comment would be held at the end of the meeting.

Student Affairs: Student Representatives Report

0:17

Mrs. Webb introduced seniors Molly Januck and Meghan Welch, both of whom are Student Council representatives.

Meghan and Molly told the Board that they personally like the way the Learn at School & Learn at Home Hybrid model is working and think it is helping to prepare them for the independent learning that will be required of them in college.

Molly said it is hard to see only half of the senior class members, especially since this is their last year at HHS.

Meghan said the entire student body seems really conflicted about returning to in-person instruction, and if that happens, how it should happen. She included herself among the conflicted students.

Mrs. Hamlin asked about student social events, and noted that the District is hoping to find ways to keep students connected and help seniors have a meaningful senior year.

Meghan and Molly noted the recent Homecoming Court. While agreeing that much depends on state and local COVID-19 guidelines, they asked if the District could find a way to safely allow students, particularly seniors, to attend school events.

Facilities

6:06

Ms. Balason introduced Mr. Farino, who updated the Board on two projects.

HMS Through-Wall Flashing Replacement Project

Mr. Farino said the project is complete and was done well. He will be reviewing the project in great detail Friday to see if any punch list items remain. The contractor has also paid to repair some

accidental damage to the roof and to replace two light poles that were knocked over.

Two change orders for sheet metal work and additional caulking will be coming to the Board, totaling \$1,700.

HMS Air Handling Units 6&7 Replacement Project

Mr. Farino said he would be meeting the following day with contractors and HMS leadership to discuss the air handling unit replacement. The installation is set to begin on Friday, November 6, which is an in-service day. Ideally, work will be completed by Monday, but the library may have to be closed for a day.

Dr. Loughead noted that the through-wall flashing project addresses a leaking problem that the staff has been battling for years. He also reminded the Board that the new air handling units are equipped with bipolar ionization, which has been shown to help filter viruses, such as COVID-19, from the air.

Bipolar Ionization HVAC Discussion

12:37

At Dr. Loughead's request, Mr. Farino presented the Board with additional information about bipolar ionization and the cost of equipping all District schools with the technology. Dr. Loughead noted that right now, every air exchange provides 50% fresh air into District classrooms, but with cold weather coming, this percentage would be more difficult to achieve, so the bipolar ionization discussion is very timely.

During his presentation, and in response to Board questions, Mr. Farino said:

- The technology works because ions attach to viruses and other molecules, thus increasing their size and enabling them to be trapped by air filters.
- The cost for the size of the units appropriate for the elementary and middle school classrooms is \$500 to \$600 each, plus \$300 to \$400 to install. Considering the number of units, this project would range from \$110,000 to \$140,000.
- The units are self-cleaning and last a minimum of seven to 10 years.
- The facilities team could easily install the units, but they lack the time it would take, and, unless they were trained and certified by the manufacturer to do the installation, the warranty would be voided.
- The Board and Mr. Farino agreed that it would be possible to buy and install units that are big enough for the future-renovated high school. They would simply be removed and reinstalled after construction.
- Mr. Farino stated that retrofitting at the high school would cost roughly \$3,500 for each of the 19 units, although some units – such as the one that serves the gymnasium – would likely need to be larger and thus more expensive. He hopes to have more detailed information by the October 12 meeting, but cautioned that may depend on the contractors' ability to make site visits before then.

Educational Programs Phased Reopening: Modified Hybrid Presentation

32:33

Mrs. Hamlin turned the meeting over to Dr. Loughead, Dr. Removcik, and Dr. Thornton. The three presented detailed information on a proposal to move District schools to a Modified Learn at School & Learn at Home Hybrid Plan with four days of in-school instruction, and then to a full, five-day reopening. The proposal was created using a 4-6 week span that would provide teachers and administrators with essential time to prepare for fuller buildings by finalizing distancing logistics in classrooms, hallways, lunch periods and during other scenarios.

Presentation topics included the following:

- Current Allegheny Health Department COVID-19 data trends and how they mesh with Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines.
- Results of the recent Family Survey on Phased Reopening options
- Details of the proposed next phase of reopening for HTSD, including a timeline by grade level for moving to four days of in-person instruction and five-days of in-person instruction.
- An update on the Hampton Online Academy

The District's New Phased Reopening Proposal

Central, Poff, and Wyland Elementary Students

October 19: Begin Modified Hybrid (four-day, in-person instruction)

- All students learn in school on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.
- The current model of Learn at Home for all students on Wednesdays would remain in effect.
- Thorough building-wide cleaning and sanitizing that occurs regularly, but more extensively, on Wednesdays and after school, on Fridays, as currently exists.
- Desk shields are mandatory at all times.
- Special classes, such as art and music, will occur in locations to allow for the most social distancing.
- Physical education classes will take place outdoors as much as possible, and in large spaces indoors.
- Additional seating areas, along with the use of desk shields, will maintain current levels of social distancing and protection while students eat lunch.

November 2: Return to daily in-person instruction

While daily return would begin November 2, most weeks in November and December are 3- or 4-day weeks, providing an additional time of transition until the return from the holiday break on January 4.

All mitigation efforts would remain in place, including social distancing of 3 feet to the fullest extent possible.

- Thorough building-wide cleaning and sanitizing that occurs regularly but more extensively after school daily.
- Desk shields are mandatory at all times.
- Special classes, such as art and music, will occur in locations to allow for the most social distancing.
- Physical education classes will take place outdoors as much as possible, and in large spaces indoors.
- Additional seating areas, along with the use of desk shields, will maintain current levels of social distancing and protection while students eat lunch.

Hampton Middle School and Hampton High School

November 2: Begin Modified Hybrid (four-day, in-person instruction) with 6th and 9th grade students. The regular Hybrid model continues for upperclassman at HHS and HMS.

- All 6th and 9th grade students learn in school on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.
- The current model of Learn at Home for all students on Wednesdays would remain in effect.
- Thorough building-wide cleaning and sanitizing that occurs regularly, but more extensively, on Wednesdays and after school, on Fridays, as currently exists.
- Desk shields are mandatory at all times.
- Physical education classes will take place outdoors as much as possible, and in large spaces indoors.
- Additional seating areas - along with Plexiglas shields - will allow sufficient social distancing and protection while students eat lunch.

November 16: Modified Hybrid implemented at HHS and HMS for all students

- All HHS and HMS students learn in school on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays
- The current model of Learn at Home for all students on Wednesdays would remain in effect.
- Thorough building-wide cleaning and sanitizing that occurs regularly, but more extensively, on Wednesdays and after school, on Fridays, as currently exists.
- Desk shields are mandatory at all times.
- Physical education classes will take place outdoors as much as possible, and in large spaces indoors.
- Additional seating areas, along with Plexiglas shields, will allow sufficient social distancing and protection while students eat lunch.
- All mitigation efforts would remain in place, including social distancing of 3 feet to the fullest extent possible.

January 4: Full return to daily in-person instruction for all HHS and HMS students.

- Desk shields are mandatory at all times.
- Physical education classes will take place outdoors as much as possible, and in large spaces indoors.
- Additional seating areas - along with Plexiglas shields - will allow sufficient social distancing and protection while students eat lunch.
- All mitigation efforts would remain in place, including social distancing of 3 feet to the fullest extent possible.
- Thorough building-wide cleaning and sanitizing that occurs regularly, but more extensively, after school daily.

Note: The HTSD Plan and supporting information presented were identical to that contained in last week's [Phased Reopening Update](#), with two exceptions: The Allegheny County Health Department data was updated and duplicate Family Survey responses were eliminated.

Board Discussion of Phased Reopening Plans

1:16:15

In response to questions from the Board, Dr. Loughead noted the following points:

- Teachers, like students, have mixed opinions about increasing in-person instruction, but all recognize the value of in-person instruction provided it can be done safely, which is why the District is moving slowly and with caution.
- Sixth- and ninth-graders will be the first secondary students to move to four days of in-person instruction based on feedback from parents, HMS Principal Dr. Marlynn Lux and HHS Principal Dr. Marguerite Imbarlina. Students always need extra support in these transition years (from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school) and for some students, the adjustments have been harder in a remote learning situation.
- Students in other grades with IEPs may also seek an exception that would allow them to participate in more in-school instruction on an earlier schedule. Conversely, some students with IEPs may not be able to return to school. At-home instruction would be an option.
- Once their school or a grade level moves to five days per week of in-school instruction, the hybrid model will no longer be an option for students. However, they can continue to attend the Hampton Online Academy.
- At each new phase of reopening, the District will support the transition of students from either HOA to their schools, or from their schools to HOA.
- The District recognizes that some students may have more absences than usual, either because they and their family are quarantining or because they are experiencing symptoms that could potentially be COVID-19 related. Support and materials will be given to these students so they can continue learning while they are home.
- The District will continue to monitor county and local COVID-19 trends. It is possible that a future, significant increase in case numbers or test positivity rate would require a return back to the hybrid model or even a fully remote model.

Next Steps

Dr. Loughead said the proposal to move toward more in-school instruction will be presented to Board Members for a vote at their October 12 meeting. If the Board approves the plan, the District would take the following steps:

- Administer an expedited and detailed transportation survey to determine how many families would use the District's bus service.
- Resurvey families about whether their children would opt in or out of the Hampton Online Academy.
- Closely monitor Allegheny County Health Department data trends and guidance.
- Closely monitor District data trends and guidance.
- Continue with COVID-19 mitigation strategies.

Mr. Wesley thanked the administration for the presentation, and thanked everyone who contributed to creating the plan, including teachers, parents, and students. The information about how the plan was developed made it clear that all stakeholders' views were considered.

Personnel

1:42:13

The following items were introduced by Mrs. Midgley.

TEACHERS:

2. Approve Mr. Will Stiglitz, Middle School Special Education Teacher, who has attained tenure status effective October 12, 2020.
3. Approve Mr. Mark Gartner to serve as a Middle School Hampton Online Academy Support Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA).
4. Approve Ms. Erin Cover as a Building Substitute at Hampton Middle School from September 24, 2020 through the end of the first semester of the 2020-2021 School Year. Salary is \$22,000, pro-rated. (Ms. Cover is replacing Mr. Mitchell Nordstrom.)
5. Approve Mr. Tyler Merigliano as a Long-Term Substitute Health & Physical Education Teacher from September 28, 2020 through the end of the first semester of the 2020-2021 School Year. Salary is \$33,500, pro-rated. (Mr. Merigliano is a substitute for Mr. Mark Gartner.)

CUSTODIAL:

6. Accept the resignation of Ms. Teresa Henneberg effective September 18, 2020. (Ms. Henneberg was a 10 month/5 hour per day Custodian at Hampton High School.)
7. Approve a change in status for Mr. William McChesney, moving from a 10 month/8 hour per day Custodian at Central Elementary School to a 12 month/8 hour per day Custodian at Central

Elementary School effective September 28, 2020. There is no change in hourly rate. (Mr. McChesney is replacing Mr. Wayne Lavery's former position.)

8. Approve Ms. Julie Trozzi as a substitute custodian effective September 21, 2020. Hourly rate is \$12.00 per hour for the first 20 days and \$12.50 per hour thereafter.
9. Approve Ms. Jessica Boehm as a substitute custodian effective September 29, 2020. Hourly rate is \$12.00 per hour for the first 20 days and \$12.50 per hour thereafter.

OTHER:

10. Approve the attached lists of Club Sponsors for the Elementary Schools, Middle School, and the High School, for the 2020-2021 School Year.

Guest Substitute Teacher Program

Dr. Cunningham announced that the District is creating a Guest Substitute Teacher Program. This state-approved program enables adults who have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university to participate in training and become a day-to-day substitute teacher in the Hampton Township School District. Dr. Cunningham noted that if a teaching absence occurs, the vacancy would first be filled by the District's building substitutes; additional vacancies would be filled by day-to-day PA certified substitutes, but if a vacancy still remained, a Guest Substitute Teacher could fill that position. Given the shortage of local day-to-day substitutes, the Guest Substitute Teacher could provide a very important service to the students at Hampton.

Additional information will be on the District's employment page soon; however, interested persons are welcome to contact Dr. Cunningham ahead of time.

Finance

1:51:33

Local Revenue

Mr. Vasko said he hoped to have a local revenue update later this month; however with the extension of the real estate tax discount period to September 30th, the comparison is not relevant as many of the late September payments have not been forwarded to the District. Mr. Kline added that the mail is taking longer and some checks mailed on September 20 arrived at the end of the month. He noted that any payment postmarked by September 30 will qualify for the 2% discount.

Budget Updates

Mr. Kline reported:

- The Pennsylvania Department of Education has set the Act 1 Index -- the maximum tax increase allowed without going to referendum -- at 3 percent, which equates to 0.59 mills for HTSD's 2021-22 Budget.

- Key budget dates include the following:
 - January 11: Mr. Kline will provide the Proposed Preliminary Budget & Planning Document, which will allow the Board to determine if the District's budget can be funded within the Act 1 Index.
 - April 26: The Board will review the Second Preliminary Budget.
 - May 10: The Board will consider approving the Proposed Final Budget
 - June 14: Tentative date to approve the Final 2021-22 HTSD Budget.

Allegheny County Millage Ranking

Mr. Kline reported that the District's current millage rate of 19.71 mills is the 11th lowest in the county, with 31 school districts having higher millage rates and 10 having lower rates.

Potential 2020 Bond Issue

Mr. Vasko and Mr. Kline noted that they and a board subcommittee have discussed the feasibility of a bond issue for the initial phase of the High School Project. The School Board authorized the potential bond issue in April 2020, however funds for repayment were not able to be included in the 2020-21 budget. Given the timeframe of the project's initial phase, it may be necessary and prudent to issue bonds in the 2020 calendar year. Mr. Kline stated that he will have an updated analysis from Piper Sandler, the District's bond underwriter, next week.

Policy and Legislative Affairs

1:57:44

Mr. Shages reported that the Pennsylvania School Board Association's leadership conference will be held virtually on October 13 and 14, and that any interested Board Members can attend.

Mr. Wesley announced that Representative Lori Mizgorski will attend the October 12 Board Meeting so that the Board can thank her in person for helping to obtain a significant grant for the high school.

Transportation

There was no report this evening.

Technology

There was no report this evening.

Public Comment

2:03:13

Community Member

2:03:50

This parent said her ninth-grade daughter and her daughter's friends do not think the high school is prepared for all students to return and have claimed that some teachers are not wearing masks. She asked if it would be possible for students who stay home because they are ill to log in to class remotely. She suggested that the District survey high school students about their thoughts on the phased reopening plans.

Response: Dr. Loughead said that all teachers must wear masks and that not doing so is not something that would be tolerated. He said he would investigate immediately. He reiterated that the hybrid model will not be an option once the District moves to five-day, in-person instruction. He thanked her for the survey suggestion.

Community Member

2:06:23

This parent asked how the District plans to keep families informed of the current Coronavirus status of students and staff and whether only the families of members of classes directly affected would be informed.

Response: Dr. Loughead said families would be notified as appropriate based on confidentiality, likely through direct communication from the building principal. Mr. Wesley said the notification would happen under the direction of and cooperation with the Allegheny County Health Department.

Community Member

2:09:32

This parent expressed concern that the county's COVID numbers would cycle in and out of the target for in-person instruction, and that switching between in-person, hybrid, and remote models would create a lack of consistency for students.

She expressed safety concerns and said she worried that some parents would send their children to school even if they have tested positive. She expressed disappointment that students could not simply stay home and pick up their assignments and turn them in.

Response: Dr. Loughead said the state's COVID number ranges for various educational delivery models are guidelines, and a small change would not necessarily mean a switch from one educational delivery model to another. The District would be looking at trend and trajectory data, with guidance from the health department to make such decisions.

Dr. Loughead repeated his commitment to immediately investigate the claim that some teachers may not be wearing masks. He said this is the first time someone has brought this to his attention.

Community Member

2:14:31

This parent expressed concern that under the modified hybrid, the minimum social distance would be reduced from six feet to three feet. She noted that the Board members were in a large room and seated quite far apart for the meeting, and said she had difficulty reconciling that with having students and teachers three feet apart in a smaller classroom for a longer period of time.

She also noted that the bipolar ionization additions to the HVAC system would not be in place by the time the proposed plan begins, and suggested that the District delay moving forward until those units were in place.

She appreciated that the Board and District were reaching out to teachers for input. She said her daughter's teacher has been amazing, and she does not want to lose any of the District's great teachers.

She suggested the District consider a pass/fail option to reduce students' anxiety.

Response: The superintendent said that in an effort to keep discussions transparent, the District is communicating to parents that the minimum social distance will be three feet as a result of having all students on campus at once, not just half of them. The distance will be greater whenever possible, he said. He also noted that face coverings would be worn. The recent Family Survey asked parents to consider the reduction in social distance in their replies.

Community Member

2:19:40

This parent raised the issue of reduced social distance. She said her daughter, a junior, is concerned that even with half of the student body at the high school at any given time, it is still difficult to maintain distance in the hallways. She asked how social distancing and mask wearing among students would be enforced.

While the District calls for desks to be at least three feet apart now, with mitigation measures such as plexiglass shields in place, the parent stated that a friend of hers reports one classroom with desks that are 12 inches apart. The parent also said she has heard about some issues with teachers not wearing masks.

Response: Dr. Loughead said that crowding in the hallways would be reduced through phased dismissals and adjusting how students move through the hallways. He also noted that the time students are moving through the hallways is very short.

Dr. Loughead said students have been very cooperative to date with following masking and social distance guidelines and the leadership team at the high school will continue to work with them to see that compliance continues.

The superintendent said a one-foot space between desks is not in line with District protocols, and that he is not aware of any school where that is the case. He asked the parent to contact him by email

with more details about where that is happening so that he can look into it.

General response to this and earlier comments about mask-wearing and spacing issues:

Mr. Wesley said that the Administration sets the rules with the expectation they will be followed. In order to enforce the rules, the Administration needs to know of specific instances. If a teacher is not wearing a mask, a student or parent needs to provide specific information so that it can be addressed. The District cannot investigate reports that are vague, or that have been passed around among people or on Facebook.

Community Member

2:26:39

A parent who is also a teacher in a neighboring district commented that while lots of families seem to be in favor of keeping the current hybrid model, it has been a challenge for her family to find someone to help her children while she and her husband are working.

She said switching to pass/fail would not alleviate her stress or her children's stress. What would help is returning to school for in-person instruction.

She commended the District for moving slowly so that issues can be addressed and is very happy that desk shields are being used. She is not concerned about students being closer than six feet apart in the hallways because of the short duration. She said she likes the plan, and wanted to be sure the Board heard from a parent who does.

Community Member

2:30

A parent who is on the Reopening Committee noted that elementary teachers who were at the recent Reopening Committee meeting felt very strongly that elementary students should spend more days learning at school. She said a comment that has stuck with her is that as of last Friday, elementary students were on their 11th day of school in the classroom. She said that much of this year has been spent teaching students to use computers and other useful things, but in comparison to past years, they have not spent as much time on things like reading and fractions.

She noted more hesitation about moving toward more in-person days among secondary teachers. She echoed the sentiment that hallway time is so short that exposure is not a concern, and that it is more important to maintain social distance in classrooms. She said she believes the plan addresses such concerns in a great way.

Response: Mr. Wesley thanked her for the time and commitment she has dedicated to the reopening committee.

Closing and adjournment

2:35:13

Two parents who wanted to comment could not be heard through Zoom, and Mr. Wesley encouraged them to either email Dr. Loughead or bring their comments to the October 12 meeting.

Mr. Wesley adjourned the public portion of the meeting and announced the Board would be holding an executive session to discuss legal and personnel matters.

