



## Board of Education

701 West Gregory Street, Mount Prospect, Illinois 60056-2296  
 P (847) 394-7300 / F (847) 394-7311 / www.d57.org

### Call to Order and Roll Call

President Eileen Kowalczyk called the Special Meeting of the Board of Education of July 23, 2020, held via Zoom conferencing, to order at 7:11 p.m. Board members present: Vicki Chung, Kimberly Fay, Jennifer Kobus, Brian Maye, Gerald McCluskey, Rachael Rothrauff, and Eileen Kowalczyk. Absent: None.

In addition, Principals Katie Kelly, Dan Ophus, Paul Suminski, and Kristin Vonder Haar were part of the Zoom meeting to participate in discussion with the Board, as well as, MPEA Co-Presidents Loretta Rose and Elizabeth Straczek and MPESPA President Philene Fotopoulos and MPESPA Vice President Elin Lonergan.

### Community Comments

Any community member who wished to address the Board was to send an email to Superintendent Aumiller with their questions or comments by noon Thursday, July 23. In order to facilitate an efficient meeting, President Kowalczyk had informed the community through an email sent July 21 that a document would be posted to the website two hours before the meeting so that everyone had the opportunity to read the comments and questions. President Kowalczyk read several of the community comment emails that were posted to the website and a couple that were not included. The emails were about plans to reopen school by in-person/remote learning, or a hybrid model. President Kowalczyk thanked everyone who sent comments.

### Staff Report

- Update on 20-21 Readiness Plan

Superintendent Aumiller said the special meeting was to further discuss options for the 2020-21 school year. She said at last week's Board of Education meeting, an option was presented giving parents the choice of remote or full in-person instruction. She said things are changing daily but at the time, that seemed to be the best option. She said administration has received many emails from parents and staff and checking with surrounding districts, four additional options would be presented at the special meeting. Superintendent Aumiller introduced the Co-Presidents of the MPEA, Loretta Rose and Elizabeth Straczek, the President of the MPESPA, Philene Fotopoulos, and the Vice President of the MPESPA, Elin Lonergan.

MPEA Co-President Elizabeth Straczek said she is a teacher in District 57, a community member, and her children were former District 57 students. She urged the Board to make the decision to start the school year as remote only. She said the staff meets virtually for safety. She urged this for everyone's safety and said two-thirds of MPEA members preferred remote. She said the schools will not be closed -- the buildings will be. She said they could not choose an option that put staff, parents, and students at risk.

Philene Fotopoulos, President of MPESPA, said she has been working in an ESP position since 1998 as an instructional assistant at Lions Park. She referenced a microburst that happened at the end of a school day many years ago and another incident about a lockdown at the start of a school day. She said these safety issues caused stress for the students. She implored the Board to make safety of staff and students the priority.

Dr. Mary Gorr, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, shared what administration has been working on for the last seven days. She said it has been a massive collaboration with hearing about staff concerns and preferences, feedback from parents since the July 16 Board meeting, rising trends in

new Coronavirus cases, changing course of local school districts, and overall concerns about safety, quality, and sustainability of in-person learning. Dr. Gorr said there were five options for the fall, one of which was the option presented July 16. She presented each of the five options. Some of the options were different for middle school. The models included half day hybrid without lunch, full day hybrid with lunch, full in-person with lunch, and full remote learning. She said the hybrid models would allow for in-person instruction but would be difficult to sustain due to staff absences and quarantining, additional cost for bus routes, and challenges to staff enrichment and intervention services and instruction time for teachers. She gave samples of early childhood, kindergarten and elementary grades. Mr. Paul Suminski, Principal of Lincoln Middle School, presented the difference in the options for the middle school. Mr. Suminski said the students would be split into two or three cohorts for the hybrid models. With some of the middle school hybrid models, the teachers would change classrooms, not the students. It does create problems as all students in advanced language arts might not necessarily be in advanced math. The students might not use lockers to cut down on the congestion in the halls. With the one hybrid middle school model, students who have siblings at other District 57 schools, would have different schedules. Also, busing could be an issue with some of the models.

Dr. Gorr ended her presentation sharing the reasons administration's recommendation was Option 3 which would be remote learning for all students with the exception of about 2% of students who would have some or all in-person learning because of their special needs. A tentative date of October 19 would be targeted to move to a hybrid model if it could be done safely. There would be professional development for all District 57 staff in August related to:

- High Quality Remote Learning Pedagogy
- Technology Updates (Zoom, Screencastify, Newsela, Google Classroom for Grades 2-8, Seesaw for Westbrook, etc.
- Hybrid Model
- Social Distancing and Safety Protocols
- School Improvement Work on Student Assessment Data, Learning and Success Gaps
- Substitute Training

President Kowalczyk thanked administration for all the work they did coming up with the different models. She said the Board is concerned about the safety of staff and students. She asked the Board for questions and comments.

Member Chung asked the union leadership about the date of October 19 to move into the hybrid model. Elizabeth Straczek said it is a revolving situation and Elin Lonergan said that is why we say tentative because we do not know where things will be at that time. Philene Fotopoulos said there are predictions that it could surge in the fall. President Kowalczyk asked if there is a date when we would re-evaluate. Dr. Gorr said she thinks it would be ongoing and thinks communication would be ongoing especially at early Board meetings. We would not want to delay for it to become a last minute decision.

Member Chung asked how the principals feel about this plan. Dan Ophus was the first to respond and he said he thinks there is wisdom in being patient. He said there is a desire to be with students but when you think of the logistics, it seems likely for going back in-person to fail. Sudden changes are hard to flip-flop back and forth. There would be stress if a teacher or family finds out they have to quarantine or extremely unfortunate if there was a death of a student or staff member.

Katie Kelly said her view as a parent and principal is that she wants to be back with students. She said staff is looking for assurance that they and the students will be safe but she struggles with providing the assurance. A drawback with having students in-person is that there is more worry about safety.

Kristin Vonder Haar said safety is biggest concern. If we start out in-person and then have to change to remote, it would be stressful to students and parents.

Paul Suminski said he supports everything the other principals said. Safety trumps everything. It is hard to move forward if concerned about safety and he is concerned how fragile things could get. Remote learning is sustainable.

Dan Ophus said page 34 of the state guidelines list fever and many symptoms. It wouldn't be long after in-person learning started before there would be massive shortages of staff.

President Kowalczyk said the suburbs are now included with Chicago for people to quarantine if they are coming from any of 18 states. She questioned if people would actually quarantine.

Member Chung said at the July 16 meeting, full in-person school or remote learning were offered. She wondered about possibly offering hybrid and full remote. Dr. Gorr said it would be challenging and it would be important what hybrid model. Parents who are concerned about which choices will give them enrichment for their children would depend on the numbers. The more complicated our offering, the more difficult it is to provide.

Member Maye commended administration for the July 16 presentation and now for the amount of time and work that was spent this week to come up with these options. He asked how we would address households with two working parents if the Board decided on Option 3. Superintendent Aumiller said administration has tossed around maybe offering childcare for the day but we have not talked to staff. She said she is not sure if the district can give direction on what families could do. Dr. Gorr mentioned that they are looking into the possibility of Kids' Corner for childcare. Member Maye said he thinks childcare could be an issue for many families and asked about the possibility of starting the school year with Option 5. Dr. Gorr said she thinks at this time any in-person has safety risks and issues. Member Maye said October 19 allows more time for us to be better prepared. He said he did not think the Board was in a position to make the decision that night.

Member Kobus appreciated the thoroughness of this presentation and said she already knows her answer.

Member McCluskey said he did not think Lincoln lends itself to the hybrid models. He suggested keeping Lincoln remote. Superintendent Aumiller said none of the hybrids are good for Lincoln and doing remote for the future would be the best. Member McCluskey asked if students were remote, would teachers be in the classrooms. Dr. Aumiller said this is something we have to work through. Some teachers want to work from their classrooms and she said she thinks the district would be flexible to accommodate staff.

Member Fay said she was deeply appreciative of administration incorporating feedback from the community. She said she was blown away by the time and effort put into this. The plan that was proposed last week was within legal limits but District 57 does not do the minimum and the community knows that. She appreciated addressing some special education and ELL students. She asked if hybrid or full remote would have to be cleared with the union about the change of working conditions but Superintendent Aumiller said she is not aware of it. Member Fay also asked about the additional bus costs and who would bear that cost. Mr. Adam Parisi, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, said in the hybrid model for elementary half-days the busing would increase an additional \$800,000 and go up to \$1.6M and that it would be the Board's decision who would pay for it.

Member Fay asked if students were in different schools would they probably have different schedules. Dr. Gorr said if August 20 was the start day for students to be in-person in the schools, it would be hard not to have the students with different schedules. She further stated if we start with all remote and then go to hybrid, we could work on schedules but couldn't make promises. Member Fay asked about what kind of cleaning and disinfecting would be done if the schools were on the AM/PM hybrid model. Mr.

Suminski said a plan would have to be developed of sanitization of common surfaces. Mr. Parisi said by adding an additional day custodian at each building, it would be possible.

Member Fay also asked if we move to hybrid, how would the 2% of students that need more in-person be helped and if there would be enough space to do this. Dr. Gorr said they would get access to more because it would need to be consistent with their needs. It would be the family's choice. Sara Tyburski, Director of Student Services, said we would not displace any of our students.

Member Rothrauff thanked administration for the detail in the presentation and said she had a different feel tonight than last week. She did not think full day in-person was safe. She did not think the hybrid models are easier or more convenient for families. She said she sees remote learning fulfilling safety and maybe by October being able to move to a hybrid model. She said she would like to see some data points to decide when we would consider moving to hybrid. She asked why Monday was chosen as the full remote day for the one elementary hybrid model. Dr. Gorr answered that they had considered Wednesday at the time. But, the rationale was that so many Mondays are off so it would be better not to use Monday as hybrid. She said this could easily be changed. Member Rothrauff said she felt much better prepared to offer a decision.

President Kowalczyk questioned the elementary principals about which hybrid model they thought was the best fit. Mr. Ophus stated he thought AM/PM would be the best because it gave the teachers a chance to see students every day. Katie Kelly agreed with Mr. Ophus and said the kids could get a lesson and then they could work on it in remote time. Kristin Vonder Haar said pre-K and K are the same but grade 1 would be different.

President Kowalczyk said Paul Suminski had said remote learning is better but she asked if there were only two cohorts could hybrid work. Mr. Suminski said it would be hard to predict without exact numbers. President Kowalczyk also asked if there was any way to know how many people wanted busing. Mr. Parisi said normally there are 900 riders. The max would be 500 for in-person learning as we are now limited to 50 people, including the bus driver, per bus. If we do a hybrid model, we would need to know which model to determine how many would be able to ride the bus.

President Kowalczyk asked if a student has COVID symptoms, does the child have to wait two weeks. Sara Tyburski replied that related to symptoms we are still waiting on guidance but the minimum would be time to get test results back.

President Kowalczyk said that the Board needed to make a decision tonight. The decision could be changed by the Governor and the hybrid date could change.

Member Maye asked if the Board decided on Option 3, what would the survey consist of and when would it go out. He also asked if there would be a survey to parents to assess what type of internet capability families have. He also said if the district goes to full remote, we should make it a priority to provide options to the parents about care of the kids. Dr. Gorr said we can get internet information about our families. President Kowalczyk said we should look into childcare and to what extent we can handle. Superintendent Aumiller said we would be limited to 50 in any location.

President Kowalczyk asked if the Board wanted all hybrid options out there or if they should eliminate the hybrid C schedule at Lincoln where the days rotated. Member Kobus suggested we take the unrealistic off to make it simpler for parents and ask, through a survey, what elementary parents' preference is for hybrid. Members McCluskey, Maye, and Rothrauff all agreed with removing the unrealistic Lincoln hybrid model. Member Fay agreed but added that maybe we could allow parents to rank their choices.

President Kowalczyk asked the Board which option they wanted administration to move forward with. The following were the Board’s responses:

- Vice President Chung wanted to be flexible to offer parents a choice but with Option 3 as the best option, just give one choice.
- Member Kobus said she had decided on Option 3 when Elizabeth Straczek said 2/3 of union preferred remote and Dan Ophus talked about being patient.
- Member McCluskey said with what they learned this last week, Option 3 makes the most sense.
- Member Maye agreed with Option 3 but emphasized he wanted administration to make it a priority to facilitate day care. He said maybe we can connect families that can help one another.
- Member Rothrauff echoed what Member Maye said. She said starting with Option 3, remote learning, we have a better chance for a hybrid model to be successful later.
- Member Fay agreed with Option 3 and said to go to hybrid October 19 or later would be least disruptive. She echoed Member Maye about childcare but safety is most important.
- President Kowalczyk agreed that Option 3 is the safest plan.


President Kowalczyk asked Superintendent Aumiller if she needed anything else. Superintendent Aumiller said no and she thanked the Board for the guidance. She also thanked Dr. Gorr for all the work she put into the presentation of the five options.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, President Kowalczyk entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Vice President Chung made a motion, seconded by Member Fay, to adjourn the meeting. Roll call vote resulted as follows

Yes: Chung, Fay, Kobus, Maye, McCluskey, Rothrauff, Kowalczyk  
No: None Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

  
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Virginia Webster, Secretary

  
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Eileen B. Kowalczyk, President

Date of approval: August 20, 2020