

Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park
October 12, 2021 Regular Meeting

This meeting was held in-person and virtually using Zoom during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. One or more of the board members met in-person and everyone else were virtual.

President Kim called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal

Absent: Spurlock, Moore

Also Present: Interim Superintendent Dr. Griff Powell, Associate Superintendent of Education Felicia Starks Turner, Interim Senior Director of Human Resources Tim Kilrea, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Eboney Lofton, Senior Director of Equity Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Tawanda Lawrence, Senior Director of Buildings & Grounds Jeanne Keane, Security and School Safety Manager Jim Hackett, Oak Park Director of Public Health Dr. Theresa Chapple, Max McGee and Constance Collins Hazard, Young, Attea, and Associates, and Lonya Boose Board Secretary.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE
SESSION

Ross Dribin moved, seconded by Kearney that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees, Collective Negotiating 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1)(2) at 6:05 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

OPEN SESSION

President Kim motioned that the Board move into Open Session at 7:02 p.m. All present members of the Board were in agreement. The Board convened in Open Session at 7:02 p.m.

3. Recognition of National School Administrator Month

(APPRECIATION VIDEO AVAILABLE ONLINE)

PRESENTATIONS

October is National School Administrator Month, President Kim on behalf of the entire Board would like to thank all the School Principals and Assistant Principals for their tireless efforts on behalf of the students of District 97. The Board appreciates these Administrators for “doing the hard work daily”.

4. Superintendent Search Update: H.Y.A. Presentation

Max McGee and Constance Collins with Hazard, Young, Attea, and Associates presented to the Board of Education, survey results from various stakeholders in and around the community of District 97. These include, Staff, Parents, Administrators, and Organizations that work directly with the District.

The Leadership Profile report included data collection from more than 100 stakeholders in both focus groups and individual interviews. HYA is holding two open forums on 10/12 and 10/20.

Takeaways:

The new superintendent must, 1. Continue to tackle the opportunity and achievement gaps to ensure every student is prepared to succeed in high school and beyond. 2. Instill trust, a sense of community and mutual respect among disparate voices. 3. Authentically and meaningfully connect with all stakeholders; communicate frequently, clearly, thoughtfully, and listen and observe actively and deeply. 4. Create conditions to attract, recruit and retain an excellent teaching staff. 5. Have recent and relevant experience in districts of similar diversity, culture, and size.

District Strengths:

The survey further states the districts strengths as, 1. Excellent teachers, support staff and principals. 2. Active parent engagement. 3. Students feel connected to, welcomed at, and have a sense of belonging in their schools. 4. The curriculum is relevant to the majority of the community's culture (though attention is needed to the Latinx Community).

Major Challenges and Issues:

1. Community building and trust building. 2. Too many highly engaged parents either feel entitled or believe it necessary to jump "chain of command". 3. Creating effective, ambitious, clear, productive strategies for equity and building trust and buy in for it. 4. Need for better communication; poor quality, uneven frequency, and lack of transparency have created trust issues. 5. Good schools but persistent gaps in opportunity and outcomes. 6. Need a framework to assess how we are doing and the extent to which interventions and programs work (or not). 7. Rebuilding positive working relationships between and among board/district office/staff. 8. Working productively with both the OPTA and the Board so all clearly understand and commit to their roles and relationships. 9. Too many initiatives and lack of sustained support for seeing them through. 10. Managing the "loudest voices" and social media.

Top Priorities to Address:

1. Recruiting and retaining top quality teachers. 2. Establish a culture of trust and transparency among all stakeholders. 3. Improving academic performance. 4. Improving the quality of communication, especially with teachers and taxpayers without students in school.

New Leader should do these well:

1 Foster a positive, professional climate of mutual trust and respect. 2. Recruit, employ and retain effective personnel. 3. Provide regular and transparent communication. 4. Understand and address the needs of District 97's diverse population. 5. Effectively plan for and manage the long-term financial health of the district.

Characteristics of the next Superintendent

1 Demonstrated experience in achieving successful outcomes in racially diverse, highly engaged communities. 2. Must also have stand out integrity, empathy and competency. 3. Courageous, confident, thick-skinned, yet humble. 4. Adept at working with the Board as a team member and being proactive and focused on their goals and roles. 5. Will effectively rebuild and continuously cultivate productive board/admin/teacher/staff relationships. 6. Adept, positive manager who leads collaboratively but firmly and can lead, manage and sustain change. 7. Visible, approachable, and relatable through involvement and being an active presence in schools and an immersive, outgoing presence in the community. 8. Knowledgeable and thoughtful about garnering, analyzing, using, querying, and sharing data to support important decisions. 9. An extraordinary communicator who understands and has demonstrated how to communicate with, listen to, and authentically engage and even inspire an array of stakeholders. 10. Politically savvy.

HYA Next Steps Include:

- Complete the open forums of the engagement phase

- Use the results to recruit applicants and prepare interview questions
- Complete the formal written Leadership Profile Report
- Recruit applicants process applications conduct screening interviews, and reference checks
- HYA will present slate in late November/December
- Staff will schedule interviews with semifinalist candidates with the Board
- With staff support, Board will determine range of compensation package
- Board will determine the process for handling finalist interviews

Discussion

Board member; Thank you for this information, it was good to see the feedback that was shared. Can you provide some additional detail on dates as it relates to the mentioned next steps?

HYA; currently, we have 4 candidates. The Board might want to consider expanding the search. As we receive applications, we are also continuing to recruit. We expect to present the slate of candidates to the Board either late November/December with semifinalist interviews in December, the final candidates could possibly be interviewed by mid-January with possible announcement by end of January 2022.

Board member; Are you seeing a continuing trend with regard to hiring during the pandemic?

HYA; Yes, we are seeing candidate pools lower than previously seen. Our goal is to not just have a high number of applicants, but quality applicants that we feel will meet the needs of Oak Park. Two years ago, we might have seen 20-30 candidates, currently with the pandemic, maybe 15 for this type of search. This is also the trend with our competitors. Overall, there is a Leadership shortage. Many are deciding to either retire, or stay with their current position during this time. What’s encouraging, is the future of the Superintendent positions across the nations. We are seeing an uptick in aspiring Superintendent candidates, who are new to the role.

PUBLIC COMMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT

This comment is from Jenna Leving Jacobson, Oak Park resident, Parent of a Hatch Kindergartener, and lead for the local Moms Demand Action group.

I have been very grateful for the responsiveness of this board to the efforts to pass resolutions to empower the IASB to advocate for legislation to allow for the arming of teachers and school staff at public schools. The IASB again this year is recommending the adoption of Resolution 2, which calls on the Association to advocate for state level legislation to allow for the ability to carry a concealed firearm on school property. I know the members of the D97 School Board understand just how dangerous this proposal is, and urge you to send a delegate to the November 20 meeting to vote NO on Resolution 2. Mercer County School District has argued that rural districts are more vulnerable in the event of a school shooting as the distance between their schools and law enforcement would take too long to respond effectively. There is absolutely no evidence that arming a teacher or school staff member would make that school safer, even in the tragic emergency of an active shooter. Teachers organizations, school safety experts, and law enforcement overwhelmingly oppose arming teachers. More firearms is not the solution to gun violence in our schools. And even if we as a community believe we would never allow for teachers and staff at our schools to carry firearms, once legislation passes to allow for guns to be on school grounds, such a law would make all of our kids less safe. Students travel to other campuses for events, and we don't know with certainty that a future elected school board may not be convinced by the arguments of the pro-gun advocates. Not to mention, we should care about kids in other communities. Again, please vote NO on Resolution 2.

We of course need to reduce gun violence and protect the lives of our children at school, and this year you

have an opportunity to pass Resolution 15 that would allow the IASB to advocate for legislation that “strengthens child safe gun storage laws in Illinois, requiring gun owners to store firearms, whether they are loaded or unloaded, in a securely locked container, if a person under the age of 18 is likely to gain access to the weapon without permission.” Currently, Illinois’ safe storage law only applies to children up to age 14. With the increasing instances of youth suicide and school shootings, existing legislation falls short in protecting our children and schools. Safe firearm storage laws protect youth by reducing school shootings, reducing completion of suicide, and preventing unintentional shootings by children. Sadly the IASB is recommending a "No" vote on Resolution 15, but we need D97 to send a representative to vote YES on Resolution 15.

Please send a delegate to vote NO on Resolution 2, YES on Resolution 15, and encourage your peers in other school districts to do the same.

Thank you for your time this evening, and for all you do to support the safety of our kids in school.

warmly, Jenna Leving Jacobson

Dear Board Members,

Last week my 2nd grader was shut out of school due to the new arbitrary and ill-advised guidelines from IDPH that your district has adopted. Her school nurse sent her home Thursday afternoon after exhibiting a minor symptom of COVID-19 according to IDPH and OPHD rules. Her symptoms quickly subsided and was feeling better around 3PM on Thursday afternoon. Although her symptoms had gone away and she never exhibited a fever or any other accompanying symptoms we were advised to get her tested in order for her to be cleared for return by the school nurse. So we complied and visited her pediatrician on Monday, October 12th. Our doctor advised my wife that they have limited access to the NAAT test that is recommended and the PCR tests will take approximately 3-4 days for results. Our daughter was evaluated by her physician and given a rapid antigen test. Due to the negative result of the antigen test, the doctor concluded that they are not concerned for illness due to Covid-19 and that they recommended that she be allowed to return to school 24 hours after symptoms have subsided.

I immediately sent the documents to the school nurse and unfortunately my daughter will be forced out of class for 10 calendar days because I got her tested outside of the 48 hour window. I'm unaware of any scientific basis for this requirement. What is the difference between testing negative 24 hours after symptom onset and testing negative 36, or 48, or 72 hours after symptom onset. Apparently a negative test along with a doctor's evaluation and recommendation is not enough proof that my daughter doesn't represent a "threat" to her school and community. I am failing to see the justification for barring my daughter access to an education that she has every right to based on arbitrary and constantly changing guidelines from unelected bodies far removed from the school, and the students that they are in charge of. The decision to isolate and exclude children from school should not be taken lightly and shouldn't be dealt in broad strokes. It would most benefit the community to have the decisions ultimately rest with the parent's themselves. I understand that, unfortunately, we are a long way from that scenario, if we ever get back there, but in lieu of that it would be appropriate to allow each school's administrative staff some autonomy in judging student's on a case by case basis. Disrupting the education of students based on ever-changing, non-scientific, and arbitrary rules (not to mention a slew of unlawful executive orders) will do much more harm than good.

Per the CDC:

Excluding students from school for longer than what is typically called for in existing school policies—without considering the student’s usual health and without assessing the likelihood the student was

exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19—risks repeated, long-term, and unnecessary student absence and possible unintended harm.

This is crucially important and highlights the significance of giving parents and local school nurses and administrators the autonomy they need to make the necessary decisions in regards to something as serious as quarantine. If we continue to try to eradicate this virus with a sledgehammer (we won't), there's bound to be a non-negligible amount of collateral damage in it's wake. We are isolating healthy children. We are treating them as sick until proven otherwise in order to access something as fundamental as a proper education. There is a dangerous contagion spreading, but it's not covid. It's been almost two years and we all have access to the data about the risk this virus poses to those under 12 so why have the schools treatment of kids gotten harsher in that time? I am failing to see why these policies are even in place, while the only response I've gotten about them from local officials is just "that's the rule". In my opinion that is not sufficient or acceptable evidence for such extreme measures. As a concerned parent I am asking that you at least take my suggestion of allowing more individually focused effort in local school decision making.

Thank you for your time, Kevin Cebulski

Good Afternoon-

I am a parent of a 4th grade student at Lincoln Elementary and would like to inquire as to if the Board will be sending a delegate to the IASB annual conference scheduled for 11/19-21, as there are two important resolutions on the docket that our district should be voting on:

Resolution 2 (Student Safety and Protection Plan)- If adopted, this resolution would provide local school boards with the option to enact a safety plan allowing district employees to carry concealed firearms on school property. I encourage the district to vote NO on this resolution. Although, I realize it is unlikely that our school board would move to enact this type of safety plan locally, it is important that every school board votes with the best interest of ALL students in our state. Arming teachers and other staff makes our students less safe and supports the flawed notion that more guns = more safety. The following link provides additional information: [Arming Teachers Introduces New Risks Into Schools](#)

Resolution 15 (Child Safe Gun Storage)- If adopted, this resolution would allow for the Illinois Association of School Boards to support and advocate for legislation that strengthens safe gun storage laws in Illinois. These laws help to mitigate the risk of a child gaining access to a firearm which, in turn, can reduce unintentional shootings, gun suicides, and the potential for gun violence on school grounds. IASB should be vocal in supporting laws that keep kids safer and I encourage our district to vote YES on this resolution. The following link provides additional supporting information: [Safe Gun Storage](#)

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Thank you-
Rhiannon Jimenez

With winter approaching, what is the district's plan for use of lockers? Will our children have access to lockers or have a means to secure their belongings? Or will they have to carry or wear all their winter gear around from class to class?

Freeman Ewing
Brooks 6th Grade Parent

ACTION ITEMS

6.1 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

Kearney moved, seconded by Hurd Johnson that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, approves the consent agenda as presented.

- 6.1.1 Bill List
- 6.1.2 Personnel
- 6.1.3 Approval of Minutes from September 27, 2021 Special Board Meeting
- 6.1.4 Approval of Minutes from September 28, 2021 Board Meeting
- 6.1.5 Approval of Memorandum of Understanding – COVID-19 Sick Bank
- 6.1.6 Approval of 3-Year and 5-Year Policy Updates (reviewed 9/28/2021)
 - 6.1.6.1 2:10 School District Governance
 - 6.1.6.2 2:20 Powers, and Duties of the School Board;Indemnification
 - 6.1.6.3 2:30 School District Elections
 - 6.1.6.4 2:130 Board - Superintendent
 - 6.1.6.5 2:240 Board Policy Development
 - 6.1.6.6 3:30 Chain of Command
 - 6.1.6.7 5:10 Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority Recruitment
 - 6.1.6.8 5:30 Hiring Process and Criteria
 - 6.1.6.9 6:100 Using Animals in the Educational Program
 - 6.1.6.10 6:145 Migrant Students
 - 6.1.6.11 6:160 English Learners
 - 6.1.6.12 6:170 Title 1 Programs
 - 6.1.6.13 6:235 Access to Electronic Networks
 - 6.1.6.14 6:255 Assemblies and Ceremonies
 - 6.1.6.15 6:260 Complaints about Curriculum, Instructional Materials and Programs
 - 6.1.6.16 7:220 Bus Conduct
 - 6.1.6.17 7:230 Misconduct by Students with Disabilities
 - 6.1.6.18 7:280 Communicable and Chronic Infectious Disease
 - 6.1.6.19 8:90 Parent Organizations and Booster Clubs

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal

Nays: None

Absent: Spurlock, Moore

Motion passed.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

ADMINISTRATIVE
ITEMS

7.1 Discussion: Data Analytics & Research Position (action 10/26/2021)

The District Office Administration is recommending to the Board of Education, a new position: **Director of Data Analytics & Research**. Some of the responsibilities of this position would include:

- Operating the Districts Data Analytics & Research Office
- Supervision of Department Staff
- Data Gathering, Analysis, and Reporting
- Research

- Data Coaching and Staff Development
- Management of District Warehouse & Visualizations for the District, Schools and Classrooms.

There is a great deal of value in regularly dedicating time to using data effectively, collecting meaningful data, being able to analyze the data to monitor student learning and progress, and make instructional decisions based on data analysis.

In order for administrators and teachers to use data effectively, it is important that we house our data in a district data warehouse, ensure that data is readily available, and provide ongoing support. If the Board of Education supports this recommendation, we will ask for approval at the October 26, 2021 Board Meeting.

7.2 Discussion: Spanish Immersion Support Position (action 10/26/2021)

(PRESIDENT KIM TABLED THIS ITEM FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION)

SPECIAL REPORTS

SPECIAL
REPORTS

School Update

Good News

According to the latest status report from the Village of Oak Park, the weekly case totals are declining. For the second week in a row, our community transmission rate is "substantial," down from "high" in previous weeks. Staff vaccination rates are now over 93%, of which numbers increased since the governor’s mandate. We have also hired CNAs to support the school nurses and have seen incredible teamwork by our staff.

COVID-19 Metrics Dashboard
Week of October 4, 2021 At-a-Glance

New Positive Cases: Students 16, Staff 2
Number in quarantine as of 10/8: Students 135, Staff 2

Cumulative COVID-19 Cases Since August 23, 2021
Positive Cases: Students 59, Staff 12

SHIELD Testing October 4-8
Total Samples: 4,299
Positive Tests: 8
Opt-out rate: 4.9%

Three outbreaks last week, one classroom at Beye Elementary, and two classrooms at Holmes. An outbreak is defined as multiple cases comprising at least 10% of students, teachers, or staff within a specified core group. A core group includes but is not limited to extracurricular activity, cohort group, classroom, before/after school care, etc. Based on the average class size in District 97, two linked cases would be enough to qualify as an outbreak.

Response to the outbreaks included implementation of response protocols:

- Quarantines for close contacts.
- Increased cleaning and disinfecting.

- Increased social distancing for students remaining on site.
- SHIELD outbreak testing (twice per week) for the affected classrooms.

Outbreak status remains in place for 28 days, or two incubation periods.

Reminders: Quarantine vs. Isolation vs. Exclusion

Quarantine – 14 Days, ordered by local health department when you might have been exposed to the virus, unless you have been fully vaccinated. Stay home for 14 days after last exposure, watch for symptoms and no outside activities.

Isolation: 10 Days, ordered by local health department, you should isolate when you have been infected with the virus, even if you don’t have symptoms. Stay home until it’s safe to be around others and separate from others at home if possible.

Exclusion: School has the authority to exclude students. Executive Order 2021-24 clarified that schools have an obligation to exclude students and staff from school premises (including in-person instruction and extracurricular events when students or staff are:

- A confirmed or probable case of COVID-19
- A close contact to a confirmed or probable case
- Exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19

Remote learning will be available to any student who is in isolation or quarantine, or who has been excluded due to the reasons above.

Current Safety Mitigations

No major changes to daily operations, we continue to use 14 Days for quarantine length which is the CDC “gold standard”, and most appropriate given current level of community spread which is “Substantial”.

Vaccine Clinics for Kids Ages 5-11

On October 7, it was reported that Pfizer had officially requested approval of its COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11. A ruling is expected as early as Halloween. Once approved District 97 will hold two vaccine clinics for students. The clinics for the first dose would tentatively be held Saturday, November 13, and November 20, 2021. The second dose dates would then be December 4th and 11th. These dates are subject to change pending government approval of the vaccine.

Next Steps:

- Monitoring current outbreaks.
- Tracking community transmission and internal metrics.
- Confirming and communicating vaccine clinic details.

Dr. Wernet thanked Dr. Chapple for joining the Board Meeting, and also asked if there was any information she would like to share with the community. Dr. Chapple shares, later this month, or early next month guidance will be coming out around protocols and procedures for younger vaccinated children. This is major for fully vaccinated children in the age group of 5-11 years. Vaccinations in this age group would limit disruption to instruction by limiting student quarantine.

CPS has changed its quarantine days; do you have any thoughts Dr. Chapple? I have not looked at the data CPS used to support this change, but our protocols here in Oak Park dictate how we handle this pandemic and are not contingent upon other school districts as such with CPS. We are being cognizant of community transmission and vaccination rates. As we progress, we will start to see changes. Example, back in June we were a mask free village, things were open and we were living a Phase-5 lifestyle. That decision was driven by data we went from roughly 11 cases a month to roughly 11 cases per day, the data drives my decisions.

Board member; I've seen parents express challenges on where tests are offered and turnaround time for results. I know we generally provide a list of testing location, is there a way to also communicate info on turnaround time for the different locations? Dr. Chapple; I have also experienced the same turnaround time; I have too experienced the same lag time. Indicators on timing depends on how much virus is in the community. Since things change so rapidly, we might not always be up to date with publishing a list because there may be changes as we provide that information to the community. We would need the community and maybe social media for example to support in getting the word out quickly. Parents and Community would post places and locations where they were able to get testing and results in the least amount of wait time.

Board member; Thank you Dr. Chapple for using data to drive your decisions and for also not making decisions that are politically driven. Just so I am clear, if vaccinated there would be no quarantine if you are a close contact, but if you are a breakthrough case you are to isolate? Yes.

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

(No information Reported)

CONCLUDING ITEMS

BOARD REMARKS

President Kim and Vice President Hurd Johnson discussed the upcoming IASB Joint Conference in November 2021. Hurd Johnson, along with Boardmembers Kinhal and Ross Dribin will all be in attendance. Hurd Johnson will be District 97's voting delegate at the Delegate Assembly. The two items the board has received public comment on are Resolution #2 Student Safety and Protection, and Resolution #15 Child Safe Gun Storage. The Board will continue this discussion at the 10/26 Board meeting.

9.2 AGENDA MAINTENANCE

The draft agenda for the October 26, 2021 meeting was reviewed.

Board request Delegate Assembly be added to the agenda for further discussion at the 10/26 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Hurd Johnson moved, seconded by Kearney that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary