

**Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois
December 01, 2020 Meeting**

This meeting was held virtually using Zoom during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. Everyone participated via electronic means.

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

ROLL CALL

Present: Kim, Spurlock, Liebl, Kearney, Moore, Breymaier, and Broy
Absent: None
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Human Resources Gina Herrmann, Chief Academic and Accountability Office Eboney Lofton, Associate Superintendent of Education Felicia Starks Turner, Senior Director of Equity Carrie Kamm, and Consultant Rob Grossi.

EXECUTIVE
SESSION

Spurlock moved, seconded by Broy that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Collective Negotiations 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(2), or Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees 5 ILCS 110/2(C)(1), at 7:03 p.m.

Ayes: Spurlock, Broy, Breymaier, Kim, Liebl, Kearney, and Moore
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion passed

OPEN SESSION

Moore motioned that the board move into Open Session at 7:29 p.m. The motion was seconded by Spurlock. All members of the Board were in agreement. The Board reconvened in Open Session at 7:32 p.m.

PUBLIC
COMMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT
Member Broy, Moore and Kearney read aloud the public comments that were emailed to the board prior to the start of the board meeting.

Rachel Fobes

I am a parent of a second grader at Hatch Elementary. I am a member of this community who fully supports public education. With that said, I am beyond disappointed in the District 97 school board and administration. I have trusted you to figure out a way to open our schools for months and you have gotten nowhere. I have watched Districts around us - and around the country - find ways to safely open their schools. I have listened to scientists, the CDC and psychologists express the need for in person learning... all while watching my child learn off an iPad in a basement. I am willing to move past what's happened with District 97 since July, but cannot do that until you get our children back in schools. To continuously delay and come up short of a realistic plan is disappointing and frankly embarrassing to this community. I am hopeful your committee and board have found an immediate answer because at this point, anything less is unacceptable.

Jenny Austin

We should be asking hard questions of our school administration and why they have proven so incapable of creating and implementing a hybrid option and why it will take until February 9 to discuss a transition timeline. When New York City public elementary schools have already opened back up for in-person learning and Chicago public schools will be open by early February, why is it that we can't even create a plan to do so? The research is clear and unambiguous that kids need to be back in school, and there are serious negative consequences of remote learning. The equity gaps are going to be insurmountable if we do not work on getting our kids back to in person learning (or having the option to do so) as soon as possible.

I have no confidence that this school administration can create a hybrid plan and actually implement it during this school year. I further have zero confidence that this school administration will be able to do anything to recover and repair the harm to our children from their ineffective handling of the 2020-2021 school year.

I seriously hope you are considering what you, the Board, can do to correct the situation and whether you truly believe this school administration is the best one for our kids' future.

Bryce and Kathleen Martin

As parents of two struggling elementary students, we are truly disheartened by the continual delays in developing even the resemblance of a plan. Larger districts in the area seem to act with swiftness so we are constantly left dumbfounded by the inaction in our area. We have little faith in our District and therefore, may be forced into leaving a community we love. Our children deserve better!

Kerri Joy

I felt compelled to write to you all as soon as I could regarding the most recent District communication. Is it possible for there to be some clarity around why the ability for our District to come up with a plan is now being pushed yet again?

How come we are not able to produce a plan or share why there is a delay?

Why are we unable to produce a plan that can accommodate both a hybrid and virtual model?

Why do we not have a plan ready so we can begin to phase in students ASAP?

Based on the new timeline that was just shared I am very concerned this is a smoke and mirror show to continue to push the date so that it can then become an easy decision to say we are not going to return. Why are we not as a District focusing on getting our kids back? If you refer to Evanston District 65 they have been working on plans for months. Why are we just now exploring plans and multiple scenarios to meet the needs of our teachers and students?

I am currently ashamed and embarrassed of District 97 this new timeline is unacceptable and needs to be reevaluated and pushed up. There are many parents that feel this way who I have spoken to. I'd ask for these questions to be answered as we are owed this as a community and as taxpayers.

Megan Eisener

The newest delay from the District in presenting a hybrid plan is incredibly frustrating. How is it possible that our District still doesn't have an approved hybrid plan and why are we now pushing it back to February to even finalize a plan? As District 97 continues to punt the ball down the line and not make actual decisions, it's at the detriment of our students and youngest learners. If we are waiting to even present a plan until February, that means best case scenario students wouldn't be back to in-person learning for almost a WHOLE YEAR.

Other Districts have had plans in place since August and many of them have successfully been making in-person hybrids work. It's mind boggling (and to be honest embarrassing) that our District still doesn't even have a plan ready to go from when the metrics allow. If the metrics allow for a hybrid in mid-January, how pathetic will it be to still not have an approved plan to move forward on when we are ten months into this pandemic.

Please consider sticking with your original plan of presenting and approving the hybrid instead of pushing it off until February.

Elizabeth Newhart

Recently, we made a decision that was very difficult for our family. It is not lost on us, that we were "lucky" to have a choice to do so. We pulled our children from District 97 and their wonderful teachers who had worked tirelessly to teach our learners over Zoom, attempting to keep them engaged, happy, and motivated. We pulled our children, quite frankly, because we didn't trust in the leadership of our District (lack thereof) we'd seen to date. We did not have faith that the District would be able to figure out a workable plan for hybrid, based upon the lackluster communication, poorly designed surveys, multiple failed plans, 70 person planning committee, and smoke and mirrors approach to prioritizing our children that we have been exposed to since March. The lacking faith we have in our District has been further evidenced by the most recent decision to push back a proposed plan date even further. This is inexcusable. We have had "enough" time, enough runway, and enough data to pull together a plan for families asking for it.

District 97 has failed our children. Nearly half of District families are pleading and begging for an in-person alternative for their children. Children are falling behind academically, behavior is declining, and mental health is suffering. This applies to children of all shapes, colors, sizes, sexual orientation, grades, ages, economic status, and demographics. The only option we've been given at this point is to stand back and watch our kids flounder while other Districts (including our local D200) pull together a workable in-person option for those who want and need it.

Our family did not walk away from our school, teachers, or the school community. Rather, we walked away from the dumpster fire that has proven to be District 97. We are NOT the only family who has done so nor will we be the last. And, while we want desperately to return to the friends and teachers that we know and love as soon as we are able, it's looking less and less realistic that District 97 will be in-person even for the Fall 2021-2022 school year, based on the failing track record. I was once proud that my children were a part of District 97- no longer. At this point, I wonder if we'll ever send them back.

Ariane Panter

I am the parent of three children (one of whom is already enrolled in the District with two to follow) and write to implore that you reconsider your intent to change District 97 policy to require that all children age 5 begin kindergarten, absent an IEP to the contrary.

As you know, there is a lack of consensus within the education community around the appropriate Kindergarten entrance age. Some experts recommend that children with summer birthdays wait a year before starting kindergarten. Others do not. Regardless, education analysts have found that kindergarten has recently taken on an increased academic emphasis, almost making it into a modified first grade. One recent study conducted by researchers at Stanford University, which analyzed the Danish National Birth Cohort and used data collected on their kids at age 7 and again at 11, found that starting kindergarten just one year later than the standard, age 5, resulted in significantly better (what they refer to as) "executive function" four years later. In other words, kids that started kindergarten at six had better self-control and were able to stay focused on tasks better than kids who started at 5. The older kids were able to manage

their time more effectively and not only recall rules and learned information, but to understand how to apply that information independently.

I will start by noting that there is a lack of consensus within the education community around the appropriate Kindergarten entrance age. Some experts recommend that children with summer birthdays wait a year before starting kindergarten. Others do not. Regardless, education analysts have found that kindergarten has recently taken on an increased academic emphasis, almost making it into a modified first grade. One recent study conducted by researchers at Stanford University, which analyzed the Danish National Birth Cohort and used data collected on their kids at age 7 and again at 11, found that starting kindergarten just one year later than the standard, age 5, resulted in significantly better (what they refer to as) “executive function” four years later. In other words, kids that started kindergarten at six had better self-control and were able to stay focused on tasks better than kids who started at 5. The older kids were able to manage their time more effectively and not only recall rules and learned information, but to understand how to apply that information independently. Kindergartners should love and be excited about school. Early education expert Dorothy Strickland, a Rutgers University professor and researcher, said that a child's first learning experience determines a child's attitude toward school for years to come. For the youngest kids, the academic rigor now applied in kindergarten (which I watched first hand with my daughter) may leave them feeling burned out, pressured, and inadequate simply because they are not developmentally ready for the curriculum being forced upon them.

State law does not force our schools to require 6 year-olds to attend first grade instead of kindergarten. Given the lack of any legal requirement and consensus among education experts, as well as the more academic kindergarten curriculum, I therefore believe parents should have the flexibility to determine what is best for their child, so long as they do so in accordance with state law and in consultation with the school, the child's doctors and therapists, and the child's prior educators. While my personal opinion is that all children should start kindergarten at age 6, rather than 5, (this is because I think it is easier to change the starting age than to address all the problems I see with the overly academic approach being pushed in kindergarten) I understand this may not be realistic and may present challenges for teachers who have to meet the needs of a wide range of ages in a large classroom. Therefore, if broader flexibility is not possible, I still advocate in favor of allowing children with summer birthdays, who will be the very youngest in their class, to choose to wait until age 6.

This does not mean every child with a summer birthday will be held back. In fact, I recommend you review the data from our community as I believe – in years past – it showed that very few parents actually make the decision to hold back their children in this District and the idea that we have an issue with “red-shirtting” does not hold up in Oak Park. Moreover, research documents higher diagnoses of ADHD for younger children with summer birthdays. This is likely because children who are developmentally less mature than their older peers are consciously and unconsciously held to standards for behavior that are unfair and unachievable for developmentally younger children. In short, they're measured against a scale that's not designed for them.

All school board policies should be child-centered and a policy that designs a cut-off, but leaves some flexibility for those most likely to be adversely impacted, balances the needs of the school and the child well. While I understand that some may argue a “clear cutoff” will enhance “equity,” a rule without flexibility may well have the opposite effect. I understand the reality that children of parents with more financial means are more likely to be held back. That said, if forced to deal with a cut-off they believe is the wrong thing for their child, those parents are just as likely to opt out of public education and choose private school or – if enrolling their child in public – address perceived issues through additional private tutors and therapy. Parents who do not have the ability to make meaningful choices in this regard will be the ones stuck with only one choice available, and a choice they believe is wrong for their child.

If holding children back a year is truly an “advantage,” which I believe the District and board is suggesting it is not, then shouldn’t we be exploring how to allow all children to wait to enroll in school until they reach developmental readiness? The right answer would be to address underlying issue – a lack of affordable, quality pre-K education. We already know the majority of children in Illinois start kindergarten unprepared and that schools have so far shown themselves unable to close these disparities. This is particularly true for low-income students. Therefore, it seems clear that the solution to the inequities we see does not lie in enrolling more children earlier or subjecting them to more academics at earlier and earlier ages, but ensuring that all children get the right foundations in their early years regardless of parental income, race, or other factors that should not impact a child’s opportunity to flourish.

As educators and parents, it is our responsibility to do what is best for our children. When it comes to determining when young children start school, allowing parents some choice within reason allows for the most equitable outcomes and most effectively sets our children up for successful education for years to come.

Mike Ethier

As a parent and resident in Oak Park, as well as an employee in a different industry that has had to continue to work in person throughout this pandemic, I certainly understand that this has been a challenging year for all. And I certainly understand that guidance and assistance provided to school Districts has been at times contradictory, political in nature, and financial support has at times been lacking. All that said, as time has passed my frustration with District 97 and the administration, as well as the board that oversees this District has grown greater and greater, as I do not see any sense of leadership, or any sense of urgency whatsoever from those on this board or in the administration. New information from the District on November 30 has pushed back the timeline to deliver a plan on transition back to in person learning from December 15th, until a February 9th date for discussion of this plan with the board. No specific reason is given on why the District failed to meet its own schedule, other than a request for more time. Meanwhile, our children continue to have no choice but to learn at home, whether it was at the beginning of the school year when cases were low, or even now as case rates have increased. At the same time we are surrounded with private schools that continue to educate children in person.

Now – when I see this time frame the District has put together that seems to prioritize more than anything an agonizingly slow decision making process, while it also continuously fails to meet its own already slow schedule, I feel compelled to speak out. Even the local high school District has put together a potential plan to return high school students to OPRF potentially in a much shorter timeframe than District 97, and high school is universally acknowledged to be a greater risk than the younger grades. And it is also universally acknowledged that the younger grades, particularly the elementary school kids, are completely ill-served by all remote learning. Yet we continue to measure the timeframe to simply develop the plan to return, much less actually set a date for it happening, in months. The right answer may very well not be that kids should all return to school tomorrow, but this brutally slow timeframe to develop this plan very potentially risks wasting valuable actually learning days. Rather than solely complain, I would like to share some information and quotes by others smarter than myself:

Michael Osterholm – director for Center of Infectious Disease Research at the University of Minnesota – “The data is becoming more compelling that there is very limited transmission in day care and grade schools. I keep telling people – ‘stop talking about kids – talk about those younger than 10’ We’re seeing a very different epidemiology in that group than we’re seeing, for example, in high school students.”

Randi Weingarten – president of the American Federation of Teachers – “What we’ve learned is that, unlike adults, elementary school students actually follow the rules, and actually have been really good at wearing their masks and adhering to physical distancing, and are really grateful about having school”

A far reaching, peer reviewed study in the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics measuring COVID-19 transmission from children to adults in US Child Care Programs, many of which stayed open throughout the spring, concluded – “we found no evidence of child care being a significant contributor to COVID-19 transmission in adults. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing a lack of association between school closures and transmission rates.”

Finally, on Sunday, November 29th, the largest school District in the country announced it would almost immediately reopen for many of its youngest learners, citing the overwhelming need to get those children back into school.

Ultimately, I am very disappointed that District 97 continues to drag its feet, not look to science, and do a massive disservice to the its most important constituency – our children. The timeframe established is embarrassingly slow and now continues to get ever slower – we are watching Districts many times larger, including the largest school District in this state, whom borders Oak Park, assemble much more complicated plans in a much shorter time frame. Meanwhile, every day, our children, continue to no option but to stare at their screens. I challenge everyone on this board to step up as leaders, shorten this unnecessary long timeframe, and put a concrete plan in place to give the option to get kids back as soon as feasible, in a safe manner. There is not a compelling reason presented why this needs to be delayed for months. I cannot help but wonder if this District has any real intention of bringing children back in the 2020-2021 school year. At this point we are starting to be surrounded by examples of how to do this well. There will never be a consensus on this issue, but all the science is rapidly pointing to the need to get the kids, starting with the youngest, back in school now. Please step up and be leaders on this issue.

Erin Connor

I felt compelled to reach out after reading the email that announced the final hybrid plan wouldn't be presented until February 9th. A majority of District 97 students want to return to in-person instruction and, despite several missteps by District 97, the families that chose that option were eager and hopeful to hear about the new plan tomorrow. How can more complex schools Districts, like New York City's, come up with a plan while our school District cannot? How is it that CPS and even D200 are able to create a plan for in-person learning, while District 97 needs an additional 2 months? I'm not advocating for a return in the middle of a surge, but a plan needs to be in place in order to implement it as soon as it's safe to do so.

You are our neighbors and your children are our children's classmates and teammates and I appreciate how difficult your role must be. But as our leaders you must know the detrimental impact a further delay to returning to the classroom will have on our students, especially the youngest and most vulnerable learners. And this additional delay in announcing a plan is further eroding the trust between parents and District 97 leaders. Leaders in so many other communities are doing everything they can to safely return students to the classroom but here in Oak Park it feels like everything is being done to make sure students don't return this year. I am not privy to all of the details and dynamics that are at play so I'm not certain who is benefiting by delaying this decision but I know who the losers are; our children.

Please consider sticking with your original plan of presenting and approving the hybrid in December instead of pushing it off until February.

Nicole Almy

My name is Nicole Almy and I have 4 children in District 97 schools. I want to first recognize that we are in unprecedeted times and that our family sincerely appreciates all of the work that the teachers and staff are doing to make learning of any kind possible during a pandemic of this scale.

The intent of my statement today is not to force children back into schools, but rather to insist that the District have a plan for getting our children back to in-person learning when it is safe to do so. By the time District 97 is likely to return to school based on the current timeline, our children will have been out of in-person learning for nearly 1 year. I find it completely inexcusable that the District has not formalized a rational plan to return when many school Districts across the country and Illinois have successfully done so. We moved to Oak Park largely due to the academic reputation. I would have expected our District to be amongst the state leaders of return to school plans...not a laggard.

What I would like to see from this Board today is a firm date by which a plan will be finalized. A date that does not get constantly pushed back. A date that shows that the Board has made this plan a top priority for our community and our children.

Michael Powers

District 97 Board and Administration, I would like to express my appreciation for the job all the teachers and staff are doing to make the best of a not-so-great situation. While Remote Learning is a (very) inferior method of learning, they have made a ton of improvements from the spring. Having said that, I would also like to express my dismay and disappointment in both the Board and Administration for their failure to make similar progress in developing and approving a viable Hybrid Learning Plan. The Superintendent last night indicated that the soonest the Board will approve the Hybrid Plan is February 9th, that is exactly 333 days from when Schools closed. Think about that for a moment, it will have taken almost 1 year to come up with a plan. Holy Cow Batman that is just mind boggling.

I appreciate and fully endorse the need to be thoughtful and inclusive in creating a plan. But let's also remember that no matter how much Remote Learning has improved, it's nowhere close to what our children need and we need to have a plan to get them into the classrooms when the conditions are appropriate. Had such a plan been in place, our children could have benefited from Hybrid learning earlier this fall, when the conditions were appropriate.

I also understand we are in unprecedeted times and creating this plan was not what anyone signed up for when they took their positions. However, please don't rationalize this away, please lean in and accomplish what needs to be done. When I see how much improvement has been made in Remote Learning, I know that we have the talent within the District to implement a Hybrid Plan, please show us that we also have the Leadership at the Board and Administration level to create and approve this plan in a more timely fashion.

Emily Dagostino

Please advocate to expedite the timeline that Dr. Kelley outlined in her email today. You all have already had 8+ months to figure this out. Districts everywhere else in the state, nation and world are making the safe reopening of schools happen. Our president-elect has spoken many times about the urgency of getting kids back in schools. Schools are not the culprit when it comes to this virus's transmission and spread. There are ways to keep kids and teachers safe. Please don't wait until February or March... I'm losing another night of sleep, in tears after reading Dr. Kelley's latest email and reading there is no hope of my children—or any others enrolled in District 97—being able to return to school safely in January or February 2021. As leaders across the world make it a top priority to keep elementary schools open, our local leaders continue to fail to do what must be done to safely return our kids to school. What has happened here in Oak Park that we have become such an anomaly when it comes to this virus and public education? Are we so entitled and privileged that our kid are somehow above needing the opportunity to be in school? How many more months must pass before they receive the opportunity to the public education that is their right? How many more months of watching them struggle and suffer, disengage and grow increasingly apathetic and defeated by remote learning? How many more days of

blacked-out screens and incomplete assignments? How many more tears? Will this whole year just be a loss? How will you make it up to them?

In October, the board asked for more input and a new plan from Dr. Kelley; the request was that those things be put together with urgency. Now, another month has passed—and today I learn that likely a full year or more will have passed before my kids have even a glimmer of hope of returning to school this year in some capacity. This is after repeated false starts (this summer's abrupt about-face, followed by this fall's about-face, and now months of more delays through winter). This is even as a clear majority continue to report that they would send their kids back. Who is being served by this ongoing choice to delay the safe reopening of our schools? It isn't our kids. This situation is tragic. I'm sad for them, outraged for them and all that they have had to lose because our leaders aren't doing what's needed to get them back to school safely. Outraged at how little their needs and voices seem to matter to the stakeholders.

Please, please do all you can to give our kids an opportunity to go back to school in January. It can be done safely. It is being done safely. They deserve and need it. Remote learning continues to exact a toll and they are hurting. We all are. It doesn't have to be this way. Please get this done right as soon as you can.

Susan Raphael

My comments tonight pertain to your review of the summer math program. For the first time, my current 7th grader enrolled in the program this summer. I guess if we had known how challenging it was going to be, we would have taken the independent study or enrolled in the program as a rising 6th Grader.

I would say it is nearly impossible for students beyond 6th grade to pass the test and move on to the next math level. The current system is broken. The students take a course for about three weeks and the next day with just one day for review take a test which determines their math level for the next year. I am curious how many of the rising 7th and 8th graders passed the bump up test? I took a hands off approach with my son this past summer which was a mistake. From talking to others, the only way to succeed was to hire a tutor or work with your child each day.

What is even more frustrating is that the teacher of the summer math class does not create the test, but rather the math coordinator and this past summer, the math coordinator was not even a current math teacher. I guess if I had an older child or talked to more parents I would have known to take the course in the summer of 5th Grade, but we didn't and that was our mistake, but a very costly mistake.

Under the current District 97 Middle School Math system, students have so little opportunity to move up even if they are like my son who continues to obtain close to perfect scores on every math test he has taken in the middle school level without any re-dos. And what is even more frustrating unless he somehow passes the summer bump up this year, he will be two years behind other 8th graders who move on to Geometry 1 next year.

There has been some discussion to offer 8th Graders the opportunity to take Algebra 1 or 8/9 Math. I hope this will be an option next year since it makes the most sense, otherwise, these current Math 7/8 Kids do not have Algebra 1 until High School.

As a Board, I know you have lots on your plate, but I encourage you not to just accept this report from admin, but to ask questions and ask out how the current math program works, determine what changes are needed, especially if the purpose of the summer bump is to create more opportunities for all students to obtain higher achievement.

Jenae Shanley

I am very disappointed in your mismanagement of expectations of a return to school plan. You need to be aware that there are children who are suffering in remote learning environments. By delaying the timeline three times, you continue to fail these students and families who are holding on by a thread. Families need to see a plan as soon as possible so that we can make decisions on whether or not District 97 is still the right fit for our family when it is safe to return. What the District is doing with its lack of communication and missing timelines is not okay, it is inaction. Inaction is leadership ignorance. Please have some situational awareness and take accountability on this matter.

Eric Friedman

We should express our reliance,
On the principles of science.

Protecting each kid,
From the COVID.

But the problems we must kick,
Are not only that people get sick?

We must also consider the impact on our children's mental health,
Which has not been stealth.

There has been lost education,
Across our nation.

But in Oak Park,
The lack of planning has made it especially dark.

When we dumped plans for in-person school last summer,
It was a bummer.

In October there was a new plan with a tiny amount of in-person class,
But that (explicative).

So we've started over from scratch,
Planning for schools from Brooks to Hatch.

Now there's been another delay,
To my dismay.

When we think about what to do,
Let's look to our guru.

Would you be (explicative)
If I mentioned our top immunologist?

His name is Anthony Fauci,
And I've never seen him grouchy.

He said elementary schools seem not to be significantly spreading,
This pandemic that we're dreading.

He said don't be fools,
Open the schools!

Carolyn and Steve Goldbaber

Thank you for the opportunity to let our voices be heard in this forum. We have been Oak Park residents for eight years and have two children at Hatch elementary.

We've been following the board meetings, emails, participated in surveys, and have had good discussions with other parents.

Reflecting back on the last eight months, we find ourselves still asking these questions...

- How are larger school Districts able to implement their own plans and safely return students and teachers to the classroom?
- What is preventing you from making a decision?
- Why is your decision taking so long?

In our opinion, the reason why these questions haven't been answered is due to a failure in leadership.

While there's good intent in trying to listen to every opinion, and do more surveys, and build more consensus, you do have enough information to make a decision.

Is it a decision everyone will agree with? Of course not. That will never happen.

Stop delaying. Stop punting the proverbial football down the field. Stop saying more people need to be heard. It's time to step up and execute your plan.

We will support your decision either way, but what we won't support is if after 8 months of planning, board meetings, emails and surveys... you delay your decision, again.

Being a leader means making tough decisions. Being a leader means you can't make everyone happy. Being a leader is tough. But leaders find a way to make it happen. Stop delaying. Start leading. Make a decision.

SPECIAL REPORT

DISTRICT 97 RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN

SPECIAL REPORTS

Dr. Kelley explained that the message that went out regarding the timeline was not meant to imply that there was no plan at all. She explained that the plan has been in existence since October 9, 2020 when it was shared with the public. On October 13, 2020 the community indicated that they would like to see changes.

Dr. Kelley explained that the priorities have always been the health and safety of our students and staff, providing consistent, high quality learning experiences, and commitment to equity. The district heard that there was a call for more community engagement and revisions to the plan, so administration developed the Superintendent's Advisory Panel.

Dr. Kelley explained that there are several reasons for addressing the timeline. The district needs to engage with the community. Administration was told to not come to the board with a final plan, but a draft so the community has an opportunity for revisions and refinement before it is finalized. It was very clear that there is an overwhelming stance around safety and live streaming with staff. Administration

heard back from the medical professionals who desired to speak with administration, so a meeting is scheduled for that purpose tomorrow. Administration still needs to collect additional input from the nurses and principals. That meeting will be held next Monday.

Members of the board and administration are still finalizing agreements with the teachers' union. Additionally, Dr. Kelley noted that winter break starts on December 23 and ends on January 11. She explained that the need to revise the timeline is not because the District does not have a plan, but to allow time for the reasons shared above. The additional time will allow the team to dig into the key findings, especially those with concerns.

Dr. Kelley reported that the feedback from the groups will be shared during the January 12 board meeting, with a final version shared on January 26. Since the board follows a protocol of hearing reports at one meeting and taking action on them at the following meeting, her recommended timeline for approval would be that the board approve the plan on February 9. She suggested that the board could make an exception and approve the plan during the January 26 board meeting, if they would like to shorten the timeline. She explained that, at best, the students could be returning to school as soon as February 1, with the special education department potentially returning on January 12.

It was suggested that the board consider holding a special meeting in December to discuss the findings so the administrative team does not feel the need to work over the winter break. Dr. Kelley indicated that she would discuss the opportunity with her team. It was suggested that everyone be realistic about the return to school date, noting that many families will be traveling and gathering over the holidays, and the earliest that the district could have students back in school would be mid-January, but realistically it would be February.

Amanda Siegfried reported that the parent survey was shared with families from November 7 through November 12, and received about 4,512 responses. She explained that the primary goal of the survey was to gauge how many students would be coming onsite and how many would continue to learn remotely. She reported that the response indicated a 50/50 split. She indicated that the survey also tried to identify the top concerns about returning to the hybrid model. She noted that the top concerns across all groups were;

- Risk of contracting Covid-19 (71.5 percent)
- Students, staff and/or families following healthy and safety protocols (69 percent)
- Maintaining current class/teacher assignments (41.1 percent)
- Building ventilation (30 percent)
- Quality/continuity of instruction (29.9 percent)
- Building cleanliness (11.1 percent)
- Child care (7.3 percent)
- No concerns (4.9 percent)
- Other (3.9 percent)
- Transportation (2.9 percent)

Siegfried explained that the survey results were looked at by racial/ethnic group, which indicated a 50/50 split again. A majority of families of color indicated that they would prefer to stay remote. She also noted that free and reduced lunch status indicated that 55 percent preferred to work remotely.

Siegfried explained the Thought Exchange process and told the board that the purpose of this tool is to allow the broader community to feel heard in their own voice, to consider the ideas that other parents have contributed, to allow the district to see the level of alignment/agreement or lack of alignment with

the ideas offered, and to help the district understand which components of in-person learning are most important to families.

The question shared via the Thought Exchange was;

As we reflect on the three main areas of improvement (maintaining current class/teacher, changing the proposed schedule and addressing lunch), what are the most important things the advisory panel should consider in an updated hybrid plan?

1,595 people participated in the Thought Exchange, and shared 1,985 comments. Respondents consisted of 45 percent parents/guardians, 25 percent staff, 26 percent students, 1 percent community members and 3 percent were both parents and staff members. Siegfried shared the breakdown by demographics and explained that the dashboard would be available for the board to review.

The key thoughts that emerged from this process were;

- **Ensuring that middle school and elementary school needs are met** - Both realities could necessitate two different visions.
- **Maintain class/teacher** – defeats the purpose of taking all these months to build a classroom community for it to just be broken up and having to start from scratch.
- **I think it's important to consider the different ages of students when thinking about the plan** – The needs of kindergarteners are much different than an 8th grader and the same hybrid model might not work for both. It is okay if they are different.

Siegfried noted that a lot of the ideas shared via the Thought Exchange were consistent with those shared via other means. It was noted that the district has all the necessary PPE in stock and that Oak Park has its own health department, which is a huge resource.

Michael Arensdorff explained the logistics of live streaming of classes. He noted that all staff have participated in professional learning that supports remote learning practices and they have ongoing access to resources available to them.

Eboney Lofton expressed the need to consider class sizes once the district knows how many students will come back onsite.

Three options were shared for consideration.

Option 1

Students would attend in person from 8:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m., with remote learning taking place from 12:30 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. There would be two cohorts of students. One group would attend on Monday and Tuesday, the other group would attend on Wednesday and Thursday, with Friday being an alternate day.

Option 2

Elementary students would attend from 8:00 a.m. – noon. Middle School students would attend from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Two cohorts would exist. The first cohort would attend classes on Monday and Tuesday, the second cohort would attend on Thursday and Friday, with Wednesday being an alternate day.

Option 3

Elementary students would attend from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., and Middle School students would attend from 9:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. The challenge with this option would be lunch.

With all options, the disinfection and deep cleaning would occur after-hours. Dr. Kelley explained that all three options give the district an opportunity to teach in a different way and create new practices.

Dr. Kelley told the board that she will share another update with them during the December 15 board meeting. At that time, she will have updates from the nurses and medical professionals.

RECOMMENDATION FOR SUMMER PROGRAMMING

Eboney Lofton introduced Tracy Hamm, Director of Special Education, Tawanda Lawrence, Director of Curriculum, and Faith Cole, Director of MTSS who shared an update on the summer 2021 programming recommendation.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Education with a summary of the district's 2020 summer programs and recommendations for summer 2021 programming for grades K-8.

District 97 provides a variety of summer programming that reflects our district's vision to create a positive learning environment for all students that is equitable, inclusive, and focused on the whole child. The summer programming also contributes to helping all of the students experience or achieve the following goals:

- Known, nurtured, and celebrated LEARNER
- Empowered and passionate SCHOLAR
- Confident and persistent ACHIEVER
- Creative CRITICAL THINKER & GLOBAL CITIZEN

Cole reported that the programs last summer were fully supported by District 97 staff who provided a curriculum that was personalized for each students' needs. The team reported on the number of students and the demographics of those who attended. Cole expressed interest in further developing the math curriculum for grades K-4.

She noted that the enrollment for the Summer Launch program was slightly increased last summer. The program was revamped to build upon the reading components of the program to meet the needs of all students. Cole expressed interest in purchasing math manipulatives for this program.

For the 2021 summer programming, the team will send invitation letters to families in January. The program will be similar to last year, and will be personalized for each student.

The Extended School Year (ESY) program runs for four weeks and is offered to students with IEPs. It will offer specially designed instruction that addresses each students IEP goals. ESY eligibility is determined by the IEP team, which includes the parents input.

The Newcomers English Learners program will be offered to new students who have English as a second language. The program will run for four weeks. This program can be partnered with the Summer Launch program so that students can attend both.

The Middle School Summer Math Enrichment program will offer flexibility so students can choose the time that they want to attend. It will offer review courses and bridge courses for sixth through eighth graders, and offer whole group, small group and independent study opportunities.

The Summer Music Camp was held virtually last year for students in fourth through eighth grades. It included four 30 minute private lessons and culminated with a program at the end. For the 2021 summer program, new technology resources will be utilized to provide a more robust program.

The Step Up program will be offered for students who need additional support around the trimester three standards. It will offer consistent implementation and review of trimester three standards as written by our curriculum developers. The program will introduce culturally relevant middle school ELA curriculum and will offer morning and afternoon sessions.

The timeline for the summer offerings was shared. Lofton asked the board to consider approving the budget of \$166,997, and noted that this proposal is actually less than last year's budget.

Board comments included a request for an update on the summer math program. This item will return to the board for approval on December 15, 2020.

ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS

3.1.1 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE NOVEMBER 10, 2020 BOARD MEETING

Spurlock moved, seconded by Kearney, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the minutes from the November 10, 2020 board meeting as presented.

Ayes: Spurlock, Kearney, Moore, Kim, Breymaier, Broy, and Liebl
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.1.2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE NOVEMBER 18, 2020 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

Spurlock moved, seconded by Broy, that the Board of Education, District 97, approve the minutes from the November 18, 2020 special board meeting as presented.

Ayes: Spurlock, Broy, Kearney, Moore, Kim, Breymaier, and Liebl
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

3.2.1 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

Spurlock moved, seconded by Moore, that the Board of Education, District 97, accept the consent agenda as presented.

4.2.1 Bill List

Ayes: Spurlock, Moore, Breymaier, Kim, Broy, Kearney, and Liebl
Nays: None
Absent: None
Motion passed.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

POLICY REVIEW

Policy 7:50 (School Admissions and Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools)

The Policy Committee has proposed revisions to Board Policy 7:50, which addresses student admissions. The goal was to set clear guidelines for the age of first enrollment, for students first entering the district in kindergarten and/or first grade.

- This issue recently came to the administration's attention after it received a number of requests this fall from families seeking to delay enrollment of their students. Several families contacted us requesting to wait a year to enroll their student in kindergarten at age 6, instead of the typical age 5. After looking into this further, it came to administrations attention that, while the current policy language does speak to the minimum age of enrollment for students first entering the district, it does not speak to the maximum age of enrollment.
- With any policy review, the district's equity policy (Policy 7:12), which was approved by the Board of Education in March 2019, requires the district to examine the policy through an equity lens. As a District, we are charged with identifying policies, procedures and practices that contribute to educational inequities and eliminate or reform them in a transparent manner.

Member Kearney explained the goal is to provide clarity, as the current policy and practices lacked consistency. The recommended wording is consistent with research for the long-term interest for children, and identifies that there might be some exceptions to the rule.

Faith Cole reminded the board that when students come to the district, the faculty is ready to receive them. The MTSS program will support their needs.

Policy 6:280 (Grading and Promotion)

Eboney Lofton explained that this policy has been revised to make sure that all interventions are administered prior to considering the retention of a student.

It was suggested that staff should be trained on these policies to ensure that everyone is interpreting them the same and following them consistently.

Policy 7:345 (Use of Educational Technologies; Student Data Privacy and Security)

Kearney explained that this policy was revised to include wording to identify the Technology Director as the Data Privacy Office.

BUDGET AUTHORITY ADOPTION

Grossi explained that this annual action by the board allows for the beginning of the budget process for the next school year. He shared the timeline and noted that the business office and human resources have already begun the transition to the new financial software. This item will return to the board for action on December 15, 2020.

FOOD SERVICE AND STUDENT REGISTRATION FEES

Grossi explained that this is an annual request to the board. The board will be asked to approve the food service and student registration fees with no change from the 2019-2020 budget. This item will return to the board for action on December 15, 2020.

DEPOSITORIES AND SIGNATORIES

Grossi explained that this is an annual request to the board. The request is being presented to the board with no changes from last year. This item will return to the board for action on December 15, 2020.

DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY

Lofton explained that the disposal request addresses the need to weed outdated curricula and library books at Hatch, Mann, Whittier and Irving. This item will return to the board for action on December 15, 2020,

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

STANDING BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP (as needed – FAC, FORC, CCE and CLAIM)

FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FAC)

The next FAC meeting will be held on December 14, 2020.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL LIAISON REPORT FOLLOW UP (as needed – IGOV, PTO council, CEC, OPEF, Community Council, Tri-Board on Equity, Policy, and Self-Evaluation)

COLLABORATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

During their recent meeting, the Collaboration discussed ways that the organization is reaching out to the community.

IGOV

IGOV is planning to host a virtual session to help candidates running for public elected positions.

CONCLUDING ITEMS

CONCLUDING ITEMS

BOARD REMARKS

No comments were shared at this time.

AGENDA MAINTENANCE

The draft agendas for the December 15, 2020 meeting was reviewed.

ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Spurlock moved, seconded by Breymaier that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was approved by voice roll call. There being no further business to conduct, Vice President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 10:11 p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary