

Henderson County Board of Public Education

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

MINUTES

July 20, 2020

The Henderson County Board of Public Education met in a special called business meeting on Monday July 20, 2020, beginning at 2:00 pm, at 414 4th Avenue West, Hendersonville, NC.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the July 20, 2020 business meeting was held in accordance with approved, safety thresholds for public gatherings established by local health officials and Governor Roy Cooper. We are currently under Phase II of Executive Order 151 across the state. Capacity for the public/staff to attend was capped at no more than 10 persons (no more than 12 per 1000 sq. ft.) Therefore, no members of the public were allowed into the meeting room. The Board received public comment via email prior to the meeting. The meeting was accessible to the public via a live stream link on the HCPS YouTube channel, <http://tiny.cc/HCPSlive>.

Board Members Present: Blair Craven, Chairperson; Rick Wood, Vice Chairperson; Michael Absher, Dot Case, Mary Louise Corn, Jay Egolf and Amy Lynn Holt.

Administrative Staff Present: Bo Caldwell, Ed.S. Superintendent; John Bryant, Ed.D., Associate Superintendent, Administrative Services; Jan King, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; Rick Fender, Chief Technology Officer and Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer.

Administrative Staff Absent: Scott Rhodes, Chief Human Resources Officer

Attorney Present: Mr. Chris Campbell

Board Clerk: Mrs. Kathy R. Johnson

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chairman, Mr. Blair Craven called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 p.m. and led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Mr. Blair Craven asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Mrs. Mary Louise Corn moved that the agenda be approved as presented, seconded by Mr. Rick Wood. *(Unanimously approved.)*

PUBLIC COMMENT

Board members read 17 pre-submitted public comments aloud. All comments were related to the return to school plans proposed for August 17, 2020. The majority of the letters supported students being on an all virtual learning option, Plan C. A few letters shared support for students returning to face-to-face in school instruction.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented in Closed Session. Mr. Michael Absher seconded the motion. All board members agreed. *(Unanimously approved.)*

A. Minutes – July 13, 2020 *(Regular Business Meeting)*

B. Personnel *(as presented in closed session)*

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

A. APPROVAL – FEDERAL FUNDS SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT

Dr. Jan King presented requests for two companies to be approved as sole source vendors for 2020-2021:

1. CDW Government, Inc.

Dr. King stated that for the 2020-2021 school year, Board of Education members are asked to consider allowing the district to partner solely with CDW Government, Inc. for Dell product purchases. This same request was presented in prior years as well.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt made a motion that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve CDW Government, Inc. as a sole source vendor for the 2020-2021 school year. Mrs. Mary Louise Corn seconded. *(Unanimously approved.)*

2. CISNC (Communities in Schools North Carolina/Jobs for America's Graduates)

Dr. King said that beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, the Henderson County Career Academy was identified as one of seven North Carolina schools to serve as a pilot site for the Jobs for North Carolina Graduates (JNCG) program, a new endeavor based on the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) national model. Communities in Schools North Carolina, in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Commerce, launched the initiative with the goal of bolstering tomorrow's workforce through job training. Locally, Mrs. Virginia Haynes has led the program at the Career Academy at no cost to the district since 2017. The results of the pilot have been favorable, boasting high graduation rates and positive post-secondary placements for participants. Communities in Schools North Carolina is expanding the program beyond the initial seven pilot sites, and cost sharing is now required to participate. Board members are asked to consider identifying Communities in Schools North Carolina as a sole source vendor which in turn would allow the district to utilize \$24,000 of federal funds dedicated to alternative school programming (PRC105) to support cost sharing of the program.

Mr. Rick Wood made a motion that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve Communities in Schools North Carolina as a sole source vendor for the Jobs for America's Graduates program at the Career Academy for the 2020-2021 school year. Ms. Dot Case seconded. *(Unanimously approved.)*

B. APPROVAL – REENTRY PLAN FOR 2020-2021

Superintendent Bo Caldwell and members of the Leadership Team presented two options for students to return to school on August 17, 2020. Plan B, was designated by Governor Roy Cooper as the statewide plan on Tuesday, July 14, 2020 and is a combination of remote learning and face-to-face instruction. Local districts were given an option to choose Plan C, which is an all virtual educational model.

Mr. Caldwell introduced Henderson County Health Director, Mr. Steve Smith to provide an update from the Health Department. Mr. Smith stated that the county now averages nearly 20 new COVID-19 cases daily. He said that currently, 16% of the cases are patients ages 0-19. Mr. Smith stated that cases over time have doubled from month to month. The July 12, 2020, 5:30 pm, testing summary for Henderson County: 12,152 tests have been completed; 951 confirmed cases; 51 deaths; 421 recoveries. 294 cases were affiliated with Long Term Care with 221 and 73 staff members testing positive. Mr. Smith said he has reviewed the Plan B proposal with Superintendent Caldwell and believes that if the safety guidelines were followed as outlined, he would feel comfortable sending his child back to school in August. He added that Long Term Care Facilities numbers have leveled off and most new cases are via community transmission.

Board members asked Mr. Smith questions about health concerns regarding our students and staff returning to school. Mr. Rick Wood asked about various studies being conducted in other countries regarding children getting or transmitting the virus more readily and their varying results. Mr. Smith stated that some studies are now showing that younger kids are more susceptible to the disease and results are similar to adult studies. He added that these studies continue to evolve and changing daily. He feels these studies are good for information but as with many studies, the sample sizes are small and longevity of the testing windows is not consistent enough to return accurate data.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt asked Mr. Smith his opinion of the Plan B proposal. He stated that no plan is perfect but it is a reasonable framework for the Board to consider. He added, there is a strong consensus that social distancing and people wearing a face covering have an enormous impact on the transmission of the disease. He believes it is valid for people to wear a mask to slow transmission. Mr. Smith re-stated that most new cases in Henderson County are now in the general community.

Ms. Case asked if a student's temperature could read differently if taken throughout the day? Mr. Smith replied, absolutely, that could change within the course of a day.

Ms. Case asked if Mr. Smith saw a particular part of the proposed plan that could be problematic? Mr. Smith said there is no magic answer to that question and risks could evolve at any time throughout a student's day. Even pre-COVID-19 there are always risks for children contracting any disease and fever. Mr. Smith doesn't see an incredible weak spot in Plan B, with the toolkit provided, and feels constant monitoring and oversight will be essential. Mr. Smith believes, as with the flu, children could develop symptoms within a school day but with COVID-19 we need to be even more diligent with our oversight.

Ms. Case asked about the notification process when someone tests positive? Mr. Smith receives notification with each positive case. That notification activates the disease and contact tracing investigators from the Henderson County Health Department to meet with the positive patient and see with whom they have had close contact. The Health Department has that obligation to tell the positive patient what their next steps should be. The protocol is for the positive patient to be isolated and close contacts should be quarantined. If this patient is a student, parents

of close contacts will be notified of the diagnosis. Mr. Smith is required to communicate staff cases to the school system for their information.

Ms. Case asked Mr. Smith, if you had a 5-year-old little girl, would you send them back to school in August? He said that if his child was perfectly healthy, he would not have reservations sending his child back, with the proposed plans. He added, each family has a unique perspective on what safety means to them. Students who have ongoing medical conditions may need to remain at home, but that would be a parent's decision.

Ms. Case asked, are special needs kids more susceptible to the disease? Mr. Smith Replied, 'I don't think they are more susceptible to acquiring the disease but they are at higher risk for having greater health consequences, students with certain breathing treatments required at school would cause me concern.'

Mr. Smith stated that lab testing is still quite limited in Henderson County. Labs are struggling to process tests and get results in a timely manner. He added that the longer it takes for test results to come in, the more opportunity for the virus to spread, especially with someone who does not readily show symptoms. Mr. Smith defined a *close contact* as being around someone at less than six feet apart for fifteen minutes or more.

When asked about face shields, Mr. Smith said that guidance depends on what type of face mask or shield is worn. He stated that a teacher could wear a face shield to teach if they stayed 6 feet away from the student, the ideal recommendation would be for them to still wear a mask under the face shield but it is acceptable for them to just wear the face shield.

Mr. Craven asked if it is safe for our staff to perform the temperature checks as students come in the building?

Mr. Smith replied, yes with the PPE you have outlined. He added the contact is brief with the child and contactless temperature guns make it quicker and safer for both the adult and child.

Mr. Smith stated that 'frankly, we have to be realistic.' Young children aren't going to be okay keeping a mask on or staying socially distanced all day. He added, you could do everything right with monitoring and oversight, and you will still have cases in Henderson County Schools. He added, we've seen it in the private sector and in all organizations. If parents' expectations are to wait to go back to school until you have zero risk, that is a long, long time away. Mr. Smith continued, regardless of when school administrators make the decision to go back to school, there will be a wide continuum with parents regarding risk tolerance levels for their families; you will not be able to meet all those expectations. You will need to find the middle road for the common good. Mr. Smith added that people are relaxing now and feeling more comfortable being around family and friends so their contacts are exponentially larger because of that. Mr. Smith said it is concerning to him that schools are having to make this decision at this particular time to return to school with cases on the rise because this isn't the case in other countries. He stated that if numbers increased and a larger outbreak occurred, he would have no problem closing the schools for the safety of students and staff. He also believes parents would make the decision to keep their children home in that scenario.

Mr. Smith stated that vaccine prototypes are promising but the delivery date isn't expected before next spring or summer. He feels it will be closer to the beginning of the following school year.

Mr. Smith doesn't feel it necessary to take student's temperatures multiple times within the school day, just the one time when they arrive at school.

Mrs. Corn said, so overall, we have something like 2/10 of 1% positive cases throughout our population based on percentages? Mr. Smith responded yes, but in the general population it is speculated that we could have 5-10 cases for every identified case of just the people we have tested. He thinks it's more likely that we have 5,000-10,000 cases in the general community now, which is a solid increase in cases. Mr. Smith agreed that amount is still a small percentage of our population but when you look at it on a per capita basis, we actually have one of the higher numbers per capita in the region.

Mr. Egolf asked if kids were less likely to get or spread the disease? and, are children impacted less by the disease?

Mr. Smith agreed that children generally don't experience severe symptoms, not as much as adults, but if they have underlying health conditions, that could be different. Mr. Smith stated some of the initial studies in China suggests children were seldom the transmitter of the virus and were more likely to have been infected by an adult. He said his position today is that children can transmit the disease to others, it may be less than how adults transmit it; he feels there isn't enough data out there to quantify that in any meaningful way. Mr. Smith emphasized that even with the groups of students split into thirds, it is still extremely important for them to wear a face covering and keep social distancing.

Mr. Egolf asked, how many 5-18-year old's have testing positive in our community? Mr. Smith said that it is a very small subset of overall positives tests. The exact numbers should be on the Health Department Dashboard.

Mr. Absher asked if someone had been tested, would the schools be notified? Mr. Smith said, not necessarily because he is only notified when the test is positive. Testing could occur elsewhere and that type of testing is hard to follow.

Mr. Absher asked should more temperature checks be done during the day? Mr. Smith said probably not, but taking temperatures is an important representation of an effort to do a legitimate screening. He added, you may consider that for higher risk children.

Board Chair, Mr. Blair Craven thanked Mr. Steve Smith for attending the meeting and providing the Health Department update. Board members voiced thanks to Mr. Smith and to his hard-working contact tracers with all they are doing to help track the data for the community. Mr. Smith left the meeting.

Superintendent Bo Caldwell, Dr. John Bryant and Dr. Jan King presented the following information on the reentry plans for schools for August 17, 2020.

What We Have Done:

Seven Re-Entry Teams of educators and support staff met for weeks to formulate recommendations

- Studied State guidance documents
- Discussed pros and cons of various scenarios
- Considered stakeholder survey results
- Developed planning and support resources
- Created individual Plan [A/B/C] implementation guidelines

What is Beyond Our Control:

- A future order by the Governor based on the target metrics of NC DHHS
- A current/future order by the HCDPH based on local health and safety data
- An outbreak among students or staff at any school site or HCPS facility
- A required precautionary quarantine of students or staff at any school site or HCPS facility
- An inability to safely operate any school site based on staffing deficits
- An outbreak among staff within an operational HCPS department

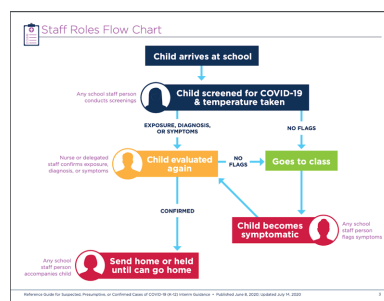
The Choices:

- On Tuesday, July 14, Governor Cooper announced that all NC public schools may elect to operate under Plan B or Plan C guidelines for the start of the 2020 - 2021 school year.
- Monday, August 17, 2020, will be the “first day of school” for HCPS students.
- HCPS staff will report for professional development and required teacher workdays beginning Monday, August 10, 2020.

Plan B Overview: The Rules from State Officials

- Remote learning option for all students
- Face coverings for all students, staff, and visitors at any HCPS facility
- Social distancing requirements whenever possible
- Prescribed cleaning and disinfecting recommendations
- Limit non-essential visitors and activities involving outside groups and organizations
- Discontinue activities that involve bringing together large groups of people
- (Assemblies, performances, field trips, etc.)
- School bus capacity restrictions
- Daily symptom screening for all students and staff, including temperature screening

Staff Roles Flow Chart:



Plan B Overview: The Who

- PreK - Grade 2 and K-12 Intensive Intervention classes begin face to face, daily instruction on Monday, August 17.
- In-Person Orientation Days for each group:
 - Group 1 (A through G) = August 17
 - Group 2 (H through O) = August 18
 - Group 3 (P through Z) = August 19
- Offsite Orientation Days for virtual learning
 - All students Grades 3 - 12 = August 20
 - All students Grades 3 - 12 = August 21

Plan B Overview: The Schedule

- Group 1 starts in-person on Monday, August 24.
- Group 2 starts in-person on Monday, August 31.
- Group 3 starts in-person on Tuesday, September 8.

Plan B Overview: The School Day

- Elementary school students will join their school classmates virtually for a portion of the instructional day (examples include Morning Meeting, attendance, literacy and math instruction). The schedule for the virtual participation will be determined by the student's teacher to correspond to the classroom schedule.
- Middle school online instruction would occur from 8:00am - 3:00pm, following the in-person school day bell schedule.
- High school online instruction would occur from 8:00am - 3:00pm, following the in-person school day bell schedule.

Plan B Overview: The Support

- Learning Lab: By appointment, all students will have access to schedule after-hours tutoring (in-person or virtual) during their remote rotation.
- Tech Support: The Learn from Home Help Desk will be expanded to include a dedicated phone line for tech support for students and families.

Plan B Overview: The Challenges

- Budget impact
- Transportation
- Student feeding on alternative schedules
- Childcare
- Substitute teachers
- Staff capacity
- Continuity of workforce and schedules
- Contact tracing
- No guarantees

What if a Family Desires 100% Remote Instruction?

- HCPS will offer a fully remote option for families who desire this type of option.
- The Engage Remote Learning Option (RLO) will be a concurrent model and allow remote learners to interact with HCPS teachers and peers.
- Registration would begin July 21 for the Engage RLO. Families should visit our Return to Learn web site for more information and the registration link.

Plan C Overview: All Remote

- All staff are onsite/working remotely and practicing proper safety measures and guidelines.
- This includes but would not be limited to staff remaining in their classrooms as much as possible and wearing face coverings whenever they interact with others.
- All instruction would be provided remotely.
- Establish fixed time period for Plan option considerations and adjustments.

Plan C Overview: The Who

- Students will be assigned to teachers and classes with their peers at their schools, and will attend school remotely and simultaneously with their peers on a half-day online schedule with independent assignments for the afternoon.
- Daily attendance will be taken and student grading expectations will look similar to in-person expectations.

Plan C Overview: The Schedule

- **Grades K-5:** Remote learning will occur from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., following individual teachers' classroom schedules. Teachers will communicate their classroom schedules with families in early August.
- **Grades 6-12:** Remote learning will occur from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., following the school's in-person half day bell schedule.
- **Afternoons** will be used for individual and small group virtual support and enrichment.

Plan C Overview: The Challenges

- Internet connectivity
- Social isolation
- Student feeding
- Childcare
- New content, instruction and school schedules
- Staff capacity
- Continuity of workforce and schedules

What We Do Next:

- Review approved Plan components with school leaders and staff groups
- Publish approved Plan details for parents and families
- Provide updated guidance and clarifications for FAQs
- Provide guidance to employees who may be considered "high-risk"
- Train school leaders and staff groups on safety procedures and expectations
- Finalize flexible, logistical planning

Summary Thoughts:

- Any approved Plan will be a fluid model.
- Virtual option is available for any student who prefers remote learning environment.
- We will "provide the safest school environments possible."
- We can "mitigate but not eliminate risk."
- We will continue to work in close coordination with the Henderson County Department of Public Health and local partner agencies.
- We will respond to questions, concerns, and updated direction from NCDPI, NCDHHS, and other state governing bodies.

Mr. Blair Craven thanked Superintendent Bo Caldwell, Dr. John Bryant and Dr. Jan King for the information they presented. Board members discussed the pros and cons of Plan B with Leadership Team.

Mr. Caldwell stated that it is our goal to do the best we can to promote and follow the safety guidelines as presented but there is not a 100% guarantee of students wearing their mask and socially distancing every minute of the school day. Students need breaks, they need to move around, it's in their nature. He stated the first day of school will be August 17 and our virtual professional development for staff members is scheduled for Monday, August 10, 2020. The School Board is required to choose reentry Plan B or Plan C. Mr. Caldwell stated that as of today, 11 systems across North Carolina have chosen Plan C. Mr. Chris Campbell added that not all school boards have had the opportunity to meet yet and those numbers could change.

Mr. Caldwell reiterated both Plans are fluid. The Governor could make an announcement that would shut our schools down. If an outbreak occurs, that could close us down. If we don't have enough staff to run busses, teach

classes, or feed our students, those are all factors that could affect an entire school system, an individual school or individual classrooms. Temperature checks will be required for anyone entering a HCPS facility each morning. The temperature threshold is 100.4. Due to safety concerns around traffic and the additional staff required to take student temperatures as they board the bus, bus riders will have their temperature taken as they exit the bus and enter the school building. Contact tracing will be a huge factor in communication if closure decisions are made

Plan B allows for reduced student capacity in the classroom and will lower the number of students in our buildings on a daily basis. There will be a fully remote learning option for families who prefer it over face to face instruction. Dr. Bryant said dividing students into three groups will provide a trackable cohort with sibling groups being on the same schedule across all grade levels. It also builds in a two-week quarantine period while students are on their remote learning weeks. Dr. King stated we are in a better position now, than we were in the spring, to provide hotspots for our students however there are still many areas of the county where hotspots won't connect for remote learning. Board members asked several questions about class logistics and course offerings that could pose safety issues such as band, chorus, computer lab, etc. Dr. King stated they are awaiting further guidance from the NC Department of Public Instruction. Dr. King stressed that the biggest differences for the new remote learning model under Plan B would be: teachers providing face-to-face instruction in their classroom concurrently with online students tuning in from home; new content will be taught; attendance will be taken; and grades will 'count', unlike our emergency remote learning instruction provided during the March-May closures.

At approximately 4:40 Mr. Blair Craven called for a 5 minutes recess.

At approximately 4:47 Mr. Blair Craven called the meeting back to order.

Board members discussed the pros and cons of Plan C with Leadership Team. Mr. Caldwell stated that if the board chooses Plan C, the finer logistics will be addressed upon the Board's final decision. Dr. King assured all parents their child can participate in a fully virtual model, free of charge and have their child continue to be a part of Henderson County Schools. It will be a concurrent model in class with a certified teacher. The Leadership Team is considering if teachers will be allowed to teach remotely from home or if they will be required to teach from their classrooms. Mr. Caldwell stated that we have some teachers who have medical high-risk conditions with regard to the virus, and we will have to address their needs as well. We are prepared to have all of our classrooms covered regardless. Dr. John Bryant said there are two types of leave provided from the state for teachers who have medical issues. He believes those leave options are triggered by a COVID-19 positive test or a required Health Department quarantine of a staff member.

Mr. Caldwell stated that if the board selects Plan C, he would like it to be for a shorter period of time, possibly for first semester or first 6 weeks of school. He said that we could then transition as a system to Plan B or some type of face-to-face hybrid instruction as COVID-19 case numbers allow. Within Plan C, all students will still be a part of HCPS, they will be in virtual classes with their peers, they will continue with the same teachers once we transition back into the classrooms and they have the opportunity to establish connections for the year. Dr. King stated that should the board decide on Plan B; a registration portal will be available tomorrow for parents who wish to select an all online learning option for their child. Dr. Jan King stated that under Plan B parents can register their students for free all remote learning through HCPS. Students could move from Plan B (hybrid) to Plan C (fully remote) at any time throughout the year but if a student registers to begin the year under Plan C, they will be required to remain in Plan C for one full semester.

Under Plan C, schools will follow a half-day bell schedule as teachers deliver live instruction remotely to their students daily from 8-12. Teachers will record their lessons and post them to their Google Classroom for student access. A top priority will be to ramp-up teacher and student engagement with a focus on closing potential learning gaps. Plan C adds teacher support through afternoon small group instruction including programs such as AIG, ELL, IEP, tutoring groups etc. Teachers are expected to engaged with students throughout the entire school day. Dr. King stated that our staff professional development for this year is focused on remote learning to further prepare our teachers in remote learning for this year and beyond.

Mr. Craven stated that his concern with Plan C would be that the learning gaps would widen for students who live in poverty or have limited or no internet access to instruction. He acknowledged that we will need more devices to support our students. He said that many 3-5 kids might be left at home alone and we would need to be aware

of their many needs. Mr. Egolf feels we are aware of our weaknesses and that will help us to go after those students and provide them support. Mrs. Corn added, if parents chose Plan C while we are under Plan B, those parents would have to be available to support their students.

Dr. King reiterated that we will need to develop clear and concise expectations for all students and parents. She feels we learned many things during our spring remote learning period and said we are building on those lessons to make Plan C a better model of instruction. This plan will introduce new content and require students and teachers to engage and truly work through a remote lens. Dr. King sees connectivity issues as one of our biggest challenges under Plan C. Mr. Rick Fender stated that the Technology Department has added a dedicated phone line to support our remote learners and their parents. Daily access times will be posted where technicians will be available to provide additional phone support. Mr. Fender stated he is working to obtain more hot spots and Chromebooks for the system.

Dr. Bryant stated that under either Plan our Childcare and Child Nutrition staff will answer the call to support our students. Directors and staff members are already looking for creative ways to enhance our child care opportunities and ensure no child goes hungry during the school day. Dr. Bryant stated that we will need to rely on our community partners to assist with additional child care options and some organizations have already reached out to us for information.

Mr. Caldwell stated that our guidance from the State continues to change daily. Once the Board of Education selects a plan, he will communicate that information to our parents and to the community. Due to the fluid nature of either plan we will be prepared to make changes as we go and will possibly need to adjust at a moment's notice. He reiterated there will be a remote learning option for any family that prefers to keep their children at home. He stated that we will provide the safest environment possible and acknowledged there are no guarantees and there will be risks with reentry. Mr. Caldwell said we will continue to work with the Health Department, DHHS and DPI to formulate the best plan possible for our staff and our students.

Mr. Blair Craven asked Mr. Caldwell, Dr. Bryant and Dr. King to share their personal opinions on which plan they would select if they were making the decision.

Mr. Caldwell stated that he doesn't like either plan. He feels neither plan looks like school. With Plan B we will slowly get to have some of our kids back in class but that comes with wearing masks, kids eating lunch at their desks, limited interaction with teachers, and teachers losing those facial expressions that help build relationships. With Plan B, he worries about not having enough staff to run all of our departments, he worries about the emotional health of his teachers and their workload of having a 3-week rotation of students in and out of the classroom. He worries about the safety of his staff. Mr. Caldwell feels kids won't be able to wear the masks and keep socially distanced as required for their safety. With Plan C, Mr. Caldwell feels that our staff is more protected but he worries how the learning divide could get wider with kids who don't have access to the internet. He stressed that he doesn't want to lose those kids and we would need to have a good plan to reach them. Mr. Caldwell stated throughout his career it has always been his goal to make the best, safest, healthiest choices for students and staff. He has always tried to err on the side of safety. Mr. Caldwell feels Plan B has too many risk factors so his personal choice would be to begin school on Plan C. He feels it would be safer starting with Plan C, fully remote instruction, for a short period of time, (possibly one or two months) and then we could transition to a hybrid model that would bring students back into the classrooms. Mr. Caldwell said he would meet with Steve Smith and they would watch the daily trends across the county. Mr. Caldwell feels that if we can get through the projected Labor Day 'spike' in cases we could hopefully bring out children back to the classrooms by October 1, 2020. Mr. Caldwell hopes by October the trends will go down and we can bring even more students back.

Dr. Bryant said his personal opinions are often formed through his professional opinions. He reflected on many lessons learned throughout his career in education: first, as a high school English teacher seeing the importance of social interactions; then, as an elementary school principal seeing the importance of a structured routine meeting a child's social emotional needs and supporting their need for literacy development; then, as he moved to HR and became the chief advocate for all members of our HCPS staff; and finally, through his current operational work with the realization there are so many people who make *this* happen the right way. Dr. Bryant feels our job is to care for all of these needs in the best way possible. Dr. Bryant stated that we ask our teaching staff and student

groups to focus on the things you can control. Dr. Bryant wholly recognizes that Plan B is full of variables that we cannot control and many of those variables will potentially put people at greater risk than a fully remote environment. Dr. Bryant believes that no one in Henderson County wants our students back in class more than our educators. Teachers are ready to have students back in the classrooms but the conditions are such that there are many things we cannot control. Dr. Bryant stated the current data is going in a direction adverse to us bringing the kids back. Dr. Bryant also thinks we have the responsibility to err on the side of safety. He acknowledged Plan C is not convenient for everyone and not everyone will agree with it. We should do what we believe is safest for our staff and students. Dr. Bryant said we have a choice to mitigate the risk to its greatest level by going to a fully remote environment or to increase that risk by beginning in a hybrid face to face environment. Dr. Bryant stated that his personal choice would be to begin school in a fully remote environment and to advocate and strive diligently and persistently to move to a somewhat face-to-face instruction as soon as possible.

Dr. King shared that this decision weighs heavily on all hearts. She knows that families have a different sense of risk levels with which they are comfortable. Dr. King said she is risk averse in every part of her life. She feels when it comes to instruction, there is nothing more magical than a teacher and their students engaged in the classroom and interacting. She said what she *wants* is not currently an option; she wants teachers and kids in the classroom like we did prior to COVID-19. After listening to all that Mr. Caldwell and Dr. Bryant have said, she personally supports starting the school year with fully remote learning. She hopes the community would want to see our students back in the classroom as badly we do as educators and that they would act that way. She hopes the community will do what it takes to bring those (COVID) numbers down in Henderson County for our kids. We want to be able to make school the safest place possible for them.

Superintendent Caldwell indicated these were their personal opinions the Board asked for. He reiterated that the Leadership team will fully support Plan B, if that is what the Board chooses. He said that whichever plan the Board selects, we will do our best to make it work. Mr. Caldwell stated, no decision will right, some people will be upset no matter which plan is selected. Our ultimate goal is to get back to Plan A where all children are in school and we hope that can happen sooner than later.

Mr. Blair Craven recapped: All three Leadership Team members recommend starting school remotely with hopes of going back into the schools in late September to early October with face-to-face instruction. Superintendent Bo Caldwell will monitor the data trends throughout the county while teachers are providing remote instruction for all students. Mr. Craven said the community needs to get on board and help get these COVID-19 numbers go down in Henderson County.

Mrs. Mary Louise Corn stated that we need the help of the community! They need to help lower the numbers so we feel better about getting our kids in class. She said as long as the community is divided and some choose not to wear masks and continue to gather in large groups, the numbers won't go down. She believes everyone needs to social distance and wear masks.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt addressed Mr. Caldwell, Dr. Bryant and Dr. King (Leadership Team members) and stated that she respected these three people more than any other people in education. She said she couldn't go against their recommendation. She specified, she wants her kids back in school, they need to be back in school and she wants her kids to be able to see their friends. She questioned, what IS best for our kids? She believes the Leadership Team knows every aspect of our school system and they know what is best for our 14,000 kids. She reiterated that she couldn't go against their recommendation, especially with all three of them in agreement. Mrs. Holt feels the Leadership Team knows what is best overall for our system. Mrs. Holt added that she is tired of all of this and she is tired of dealing with COVID-19. She wants her kids to be able to go back to school as they always have.

Mrs. Corn agreed with Mrs. Holt with regards to accepting the Leadership Team recommendations but she thinks kids should be in school. Mrs. Corn feels kids need to be in school with the maximum flexibility of Plan B. She thinks parents can choose to keep them home or send them to school under Plan B. She feels the only safe thing is never leaving your house. Mrs. Corn said that Plan C may be easier for our teachers but parents need to work and Plan C doesn't support that need. Mrs. Corn feels the most important thing is to get these kids back in school. She said she couldn't go against the three members of the Leadership Team if that is truly what they feel is best for everyone.

Mr. Jay Egolf stated that his child has some major respiratory health issues and they are concerning during this time. Mr. Egolf stated he has encouraged his son to continue to live, as best he can, during this pandemic. He said his child has been working during the pandemic and has worn the mask and gloves daily. Mr. Egolf feels he was elected to this board to represent the people who aren't old enough to make this decision for themselves and our kids are relying on us to do what is best for them. He feels we must do what is best for their learning and their futures and that is students being in school. He said our Plan B is much better than surrounding counties. He says that children need structure. He feels we should offer Plan B and allow parents to decide if they want to send their child or not. Mr. Egolf stated that he will volunteer, he will help in any way he can and he believes our community will support us as well. Mr. Egolf feels keeping kids out of school is not in their best interest or to their benefit. He urged everyone to put the kids in school and let the parents and staff decide how this can be done. Mr. Egolf stated he is not going to take the decision away from the parents.

Ms. Dot Case stated that she has weighed the pros and cons of this decision and she could not in good conscience support sending kids and teachers back to face-to-face instruction on August 17. She is concerned for the students as well as the teachers. She feels this is a scary time for everyone. She doesn't feel social distancing will work stating 'K-12 kids won't stay away from each other.' She feels Plan B is not the best plan for safety. She thinks things will get worse if we send students back and due to safety concerns she couldn't support Plan B. Ms. Case understands parents have childcare concerns and stated choosing Plan C will only mean a difference of two weeks at school for in-person learning. Ms. Case wants to have the option to change the Plan at any time as data trends allow. She thinks the remote learning (Plan C) will be much better this year because we all learned a lot during the spring closures. She thanked the Leadership Team and teachers who have already put so much time and effort into generating these plans. She agrees that we can't make everyone happy and due to safety concerns she could not choose Plan B.

Mr. Rick Wood said he has had many sleepless nights over this decision and for him it comes down to whether we can open schools safely for our staff and students. He feels Plan B has a lot of safety issues and that concerns him. He worries about the long-term effects of the virus that are just now being identified. He thinks that kids could be exposed without knowing it and bring the virus into our schools. He feels we have to look out for the health of our staff members as well. Mr. Wood feels for our teachers who didn't sign up to teach in this environment and he knows our teachers would much rather be in the classroom with their students. He agreed with Mr. Caldwell that we should err on the side of safety. Mr. Wood believes we have come a long way with our virtual learning plan and that starting the year with Plan C would put us in a better place to return to face-to-face instruction as soon as the numbers allow. He feels there is a clear and present danger in our schools and he couldn't vote to bring our people back. He supports a fully virtual plan at this time.

Mrs. Corn stated that we can never be completely safe and feels this could go on for months or even a year or more. She worries that we will have lost these kids for the better part of the school year. Mrs. Corn said she totally agrees with Mr. Egolf but she trusts these three (Leadership Team) and their opinions. She supports learning with maximum flexibility and knows Plan B would be really hard due to that flexibility. Mrs. Corn feels Plan C takes away the relationships that teachers make with their students and that is not good for our students. She stated there is no right decision and added, if the majority of the Board chooses to go with Plan C, then we should all come together and support that decision.

Mr. Michel Absher stated that he has had sleepless nights as well. He knows this is weighing hard on everyone. Mr. Absher stated he cares about our teachers and wants them to be safe. He feels all kids should go to school. He is concerned about the foster kids, the homeless kids and the kids in poverty and how they will survive being out of school. He said that right now 16% of our countywide cases fall in the 0-19 age range. He said he would love to find a way to get our Kindergartners in school because it's so important for them to be face-to-face with their teachers and the teachers may have a hard time teaching that age online. He worries about the liabilities we could encounter if students or staff members get sick. Mr. Absher stated he would be fine with an all online start to school with an option to review after 6-9 weeks. He wants the option to move our kids to face-to-face instruction as soon as possible. Mr. Absher feels most teachers and other staff members are scared about the unknowns we face. He worries about our bus drivers and their safety while wearing masks as they drive the buses. He is not comfortable with all of the 'what-ifs' we are facing.

Mrs. Corn said that 2/10 of 1% of the population in Henderson County have been diagnosed with COVID-19 at this time. That's not much.

Mr. Egolf went back to Mrs. Corn's point and said he can't vote one way and act another. His son has health issues and he has been around extended family members. He encourages his son to live his life though these uncertain times and not live in fear of taking risks. Mr. Egolf said he will not vote one way and then ask his son to act another way.

Mrs. Corn clarified that she meant the Board should unanimously support members of the Leadership Team once the final decision has been made by the Board of Education. She stated that whichever plan we choose we need to support our school leaders as they move forward. Mr. Egolf said okay, and feels that at the end, this will be a split vote.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt feels Plan B offers flexibility for staff and parents to have the option to remain at home. She has a hard time taking this decision away from our parents. She is also concerned that cases of abuse have increased since March and is concerned our teachers not seeing our kids face to face where they may recognize possible distress signs in their students. Mrs. Holt feels with Plan B teachers would at least see the kids on a limited basis. She feels it is safer to do Plan C but agrees staff and parents should have the choice of coming back or not. She feels its possible that we may start school and go for three weeks and then the governor shut us down. She thinks even a small amount of time would give students a chance to meet their teachers and begin those new relationships. Mrs. Holt feels she doesn't have the right to take that choice away from parents.

Mr. Blair Craven stated this has been a stressful week for all involved and feels we are all trying to make the right decisions. He said no matter which option the Board chooses, about half of the people will be mad. He has recently answered hundreds of emails and phone calls from staff and parents. He believes there is no right answer for everyone. He said coming into today's meeting, his mind was set to get his kids back in school and admitted he is not built for teaching his kids at home. Mr. Craven is super concerned about the kids who face abuse, food insecurities and the widening of learning gaps with either plan. Mr. Craven isn't sold on Plan B being the answer for all of those issues. Personally, his company won't allow him to come back to work for face to face interactions; how can he send his kids back to school under the same conditions? Mr. Craven said that after speaking to the Leadership Team this morning and listening to their views, he sat down with his children and asked how they felt about going back to school? His children told him they are scared to go back to school; it broke his heart. His son told him he'd rather go to school online right now. Mr. Craven restated that he came in today fully prepared buck the trend and to choose Plan B but that isn't how he feels now. He believes the safest thing would be to start school with Option C and then review the data in a few weeks and move to face-to-face instruction as soon as the data allows. Mr. Craven feels we must be flexible, nimble and trust our Leadership Team and their opinions. He said we hire these folks to run our school system and we should heed their suggestions. Mr. Craven called for a roll call vote and stated, 'we will go with the selected plan.'

Mr. Craven added, there will be another board meeting in a few weeks and we can see where the trends are in the county. Mr. Craven personally feels that the Governor will change his statewide recommendation to Plan C for everyone between now and our August 17th start date. Mr. Craven added that if we choose Plan C, we have to make it tight and make sure we get out in our communities to ensure we reach all of our students. Can Kindergarteners come in and meet their teachers? Can we get out there and meet our kids needs where they are? There are many issues to iron out. Mr. Craven feels it has to be a robust plan with an eye on returning our kids to school as soon as the numbers allow, possibly around October 1, 2020. Mr. Craven said that he couldn't go against the Leadership Team's recommendations. Mrs. Corn interjected, 'if I had the option to delay the start of school until mid-September,' she would be in favor of it, but that's not an option at this time. Board members agreed. Ms. Case stated that our teachers love their kids they will make it work!

Mr. Blair Craven asked for a roll call vote of board members for their choice of either Plan B or Plan C as the Return to Learn plan beginning August 17, 2020.

Ms. Dot Case, Plan C. Mrs. Mary Louise Corn, Plan C. Mr. Rick Wood, Plan C. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt, Plan C. Mr. Michael Absher, Plan C. Mr. Jay Egolf, Plan B. Mr. Blair Craven, Plan C.

The school board selected Plan C (all virtual learning for the first 6 weeks of the 2020-2021 school year) by a vote

of 6-1. Mr. Caldwell stated that his Leadership Team will monitor the COVID-19 pandemic trends alongside the Health Department with a goal of getting students back to school for face-to-face instruction as soon as possible. Mrs. Corn wanted to know what options we have to get kindergarteners in school? Mr. Craven said that we could possibly have them come in a very few at a time to meet their teachers? The Leadership Team agreed. Mr. Craven charged Superintendent Bo Caldwell and his Leadership Team with providing robust, detailed information regarding the implementation of Plan C to the Board of Education at the August 10, 2020 meeting.

Mr. Craven told the Leadership Team to continue to refine Plan B so that we will be ready to move to face-to-face instruction when the time comes. Our goal is to get kids back in school as soon as possible, as safely as possible. Mr. Craven said he expects a very robust plan to be presented at the August 10, 2020 board meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt moved that the meeting be adjourned. Seconded by Mr. Michael Absher. *(Unanimously approved at 6:13 pm.)*

Minutes Approved: August 10, 2020