



MINUTES

Wisconsin Rapids Board of Education  
**Educational Services Committee**

510 Peach Street · Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494 · (715) 424-6701

Mary Rayome, Chairperson  
John Benbow, Jr.  
Katie Bielski-Medina  
Troy Bier  
Larry Davis  
Sandra Hett  
John Krings, President

July 6, 2021

LOCATION: East Junior High School Cafeteria, 311 Lincoln Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Benbow, Jr., Katie Bielski-Medina, Troy Bier, Larry Davis, Sandra Hett, John Krings

BOARD MEMBER EXCUSED: Mary Rayome

OTHERS PRESENT: Ed Allison, Phil Bickelhaupt, Craig Broeren, Kelly Bluell, Roxanne Filtz, Steven Hepp, Aaron Nelson, Brian Oswald

Call to Order

John Krings called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

I. Public Comment

The following individuals made public comment in opposition of the mask mandate: Ranee Graf, Mike Derrie, Becky Kressin, Laura Ewell, Lynn Derrie, Heidi Kawleski

II. Actionable Items

A. Possible Mitigation Strategy Changes Effective July 13 Through August 31 for Summer School and Other District Related Activities

Superintendent Craig Broeren explained that there have been ongoing conversations with the District's medical consultants and Wood County Public Health Department officials around potentially relaxing the masking requirement now that the COVID-19 vaccine has been made widely available to individuals ages 12 and up. Their recommendation would be to continue mandating masks for all students ages 11 and under, and allow optional masking for individuals 12 years of age and older. There is concern about lifting the masking requirement for children ages 11 and under as they will not have had the opportunity to be vaccinated since the vaccine is not available for those ages.

Local circumstances have been given consideration, including the fact that the county's COVID caseload is quite low (10 active cases as of 6/29/21); summer school activities have less student participation so large groups of students are not congregating together, and many activities are occurring outside when possible; and surrounding districts have all gone to a mask optional approach. Quarantine guidelines remain unchanged with the exception of individuals who are close contacts being asked whether or not

they have been vaccinated as this will impact their potential requirement to quarantine. Current Wisconsin Department of Health Services guidelines around quarantine stipulate that unvaccinated individuals will be required to quarantine if they are a close contact, while fully vaccinated individuals would not be required to do so. The District will be able to determine whether an individual is vaccinated by checking the Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR) system. Only relevant staff members needing access to WIR data to perform their duties are granted such access. Mr. Broeren clarified that the District has no intention of requiring students or staff to be vaccinated, and it will be up to individual parents and staff members to make that decision for their children or themselves.

At a minimum, the administration recommends making masks optional for individuals 12 and older effective July 13 through August 31. If masks are made optional, COVID rates will continue to be monitored closely. Should circumstances warrant requiring masks to be worn again for the safety and well-being of the school and greater-wide community population, the District can always move back to requiring masks to be worn.

The Committee discussed the recommendation, signaling support for lifting the mask mandate and have masks be optional at all age levels until the end of summer. Committee members collectively agreed that the mitigation strategies implemented in 2020-21 were successful since in-person schooling occurred every week with little to no in-school spread of the virus. Mr. Broeren shared that voluntary symptomatic testing in the secondary schools was made available through the county in 2020-21 and proved to be quite helpful to families in need of testing. The county testing program will not be available for the upcoming year; however, the state is offering an alternative. Surveillance testing was extremely labor-intensive and not likely something the District will pursue continuing into the next year. Decisions about masking and other mitigation measures for the 2021-22 school year will not be made until the August Committee/Board meetings. At that time, more information will be available and local circumstances can be taken into consideration.

**ES-1 Motion by Sandra Hett, seconded by Troy Bier, to recommend making masks optional for individuals 12 and older effective July 13, 2021. For individuals at pre-K age through 11, masks will be optional effective July 13, 2021 through the end of summer school; circumstances will then be evaluated prior to the beginning of the 2021-22 school year to determine if optional mask wearing for ages pre-K through 11 will be continued.**

*A suggestion was made to add the caveat of "masks are strongly recommended for ages 11 and under" to the motion, and the consensus of the Committee was that this suggestion could instead be placed into outgoing communication about the change, and not be part of the motion.*

**Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.**

B. Pupil Academic Standards

Roxanne Filtz, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, presented recommended Pupil Academic Standards to be in effect for the 2021-22 school year. Ms. Filtz highlighted two changes including a revision to the Art standard to change the name to "Wisconsin Standards of Art and Design," and changes in the wording of the "Counseling and Guidance" Standards to match the District's recently adopted curriculum in this area.

**ES-2 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Larry Davis, to approve the Pupil Academic Standards that will be in effect for the 2021-22 school year, as presented.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

C. Renaissance Learning Purchase Contract for 2021-22

Ms. Filtz reviewed a recommendation to enter into an agreement with Renaissance Learning to purchase Renaissance products for the 2021-22 school year for a total cost of \$44,161.55. Products used by the District include STAR Math, STAR Reading, and Freckle Math. An explanation of the various screening uses that are derived from each program was shared.

**ES-3 Motion by Larry Davis, seconded by John Benbow, to recommend approval of the contract with Renaissance Learning for the 2021-22 school year in the amount of \$44,161.55, to be paid for from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief II Funds (ESSER II).**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

D. SEL-Life Tools Grant

Steve Hepp, Director of Pupil Services, provided an overview of the recommendation to approve of the SEL-Life Tools Grant in the amount of \$2,400.00 for the 2021-22 school year. Marshfield Clinic Health System (MCHS) developed Life Tools which is a program using individual therapy techniques as the foundation to build a small group delivery model. One-hour group sessions occur over a period of eight weeks for students ages 7-14 who struggle with mental health and social emotional learning issues. The end goal is to provide youth with the tools needed to be more successful at home, at school, and in the community. The Life Tools program is not group therapy. Youth are not asked personal questions about their home life or family, and Life Tools doesn't evaluate or diagnose children.

An application was submitted and the District has been awarded Grant funding to pay facilitators involved at a cost of \$2,400.00 for two, 8-week sessions. The District is partnering with the Wisconsin Rapids Boys and Girls Club for each session, which will take place after school at the Club. The District is providing a facilitator, School Counselor Gillian Goetsch, and the Boys & Girls Club will provide a co-facilitator and space to host the sessions. Required training for the facilitator is coming up in August.

Ms. Hett inquired as to whether the Boys & Girls Club co-facilitator will be a District or Boys & Girls Club employee, the type of educational background required for the individual, how long the training course runs, and which individuals identify students. Mr. Hepp explained that the administration, school counselors, school psychologists, and teachers work together to identify students. The co-facilitator at the Boys & Girls Club will be their employee with no specialized training required other than the training course involved. He was uncertain of the training length, but will verify this and follow-up to provide the requested information.

**ES-4 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier, to recommend approval of the SEL-Life Tools Grant of \$2,400.00 for the 2021-2022 school year.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

E. Healthy Schools (b.e.s.t.) Grant Application

Mr. Hepp shared details about the Healthy Schools "Behavioral Emotional and Social Traits" (b.e.s.t.) Grant application. The b.e.s.t. Universal Screening Program provides a systematic method of quantifying behavioral observations in order to translate the principles of mental health wellness into practice. The program helps to reinforce positive behavioral health for developing children while guiding teachers to implement universal, positive behavioral health practices for children who might be struggling; offers interventions for children with elevated risk status; develops focused interventions for children with targeted needs; and provides context for organizing information for more efficient and effective problem-solving discussions. The Center for Community Health Advancement at Marshfield Clinic Health System and Security Health Plan will pay for the implementation of b.e.s.t. at select, qualifying schools.

**ES-5 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier, to recommend approval of the Healthy Schools b.e.s.t. Grant application for the 2021-2022 school year.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

F. Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Indian Education Formula Grant Application

Mr. Hepp shared information about the Title VI Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Indian Education Formula Grant which supports local school districts in their efforts to serve Indian students. Details around grant objectives, funding priorities, who is served by the grant, and requirements to receive the award were reviewed.

**ES-6 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier, to recommend approval of Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Indian Education Grant application for the 2021-2022 school year.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

G. Gifted and Talented Educational Services

Kelly Bluell, Secondary Level Gifted & Talented Coordinator, provided information on updates that have been made to the Gifted and Talented Educational Services (GATES) Program Plan document since the last update was made and approved by the Board in May, 2017. A new elementary screener has been added, and changes to reorganize the document were intentionally done to make it more user friendly. A newly created flowchart was added to the plan to provide an overall view of how the GATES RtI process works throughout the WRPS system. Ms. Bluell worked closely with Amber Applebee, GATES Coordinator at the elementary level. Ms. Applebee has since been appointed as the new Mead Elementary Principal, and her GATES duties will now be assumed by Elementary Teacher Leslie Anderson. Names and contact information have also been updated in the document. Both the RtI and Council for Instruction Improvement committees are supportive of the recommended changes.

Committee members commended Ms. Bluell and Ms. Applebee for their efforts to make such notable improvements that should help parents better understand the program and processes involved.

**ES-7 Motion by Larry Davis, seconded by Troy Bier, to recommend approval of the revised Gifted and Talented Educational Services Plan as presented.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

H. Schedule Modification to Implement Professional Learning Community Meeting Times

Ms. Filtz presented proposed building schedule modifications for Grove, Howe, Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School, and Lincoln High School beginning with the 2021-22 school year in order to provide a block of release time for teachers to meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to discuss student progress based upon available data, as well as collaborate on techniques to differentiate instruction as appropriate with the end goal of helping students be more successful. Ms. Filtz explained that transportation schedules will not be impacted since students will be allowed to remain in school buildings with appropriate supervision provided during normal school hours. Instructional minutes as required by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) will continue to be met, and still be beyond what is required even with the PLC minutes factored in.

Ms. Hett raised some questions around the secondary level's schedule as she felt the background information wasn't clear about Lincoln High School's release days on the calendar that was included. She also questioned what students would be doing with their time during periods of supervision as PLCs are meeting, and questioned why Grove's loss of minutes is significantly less than Howe's. Lastly, she shared some concern about the student instructional minutes being lost. Committee members discussed the proposal, mostly expressing support in providing the proposed time to help the District's work and initiatives toward successful PLCs. Ms. Filtz will gather additional information to address some of the concerns and questions raised by Ms. Hett, and provide those details prior to the regular Board meeting on July 12, 2021.

**ES-8 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Katie Medina, to recommend approval of the revised school day schedules beginning with the 2021-22 school year to accommodate Professional Learning Communities meeting time as presented.**

**Motion carried on a vote of 5-1. Sandra Hett voted no.**

IV. Updates

A. Achievement Gap Reduction (AGR) End-of-Year Report

Ms. Filtz reviewed the Achievement Gap Reduction (AGR) End-of-Year Report which includes information on each school's implementation of AGR contract requirements, performance objectives, and success in attaining the objectives. Ms. Filtz noted that the District did offer off-campus instruction for elementary learners throughout the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also provided five-day, in person instruction all year. The District did not lower its 80% benchmark goal set in Reading and math, even given the difficult circumstances caused by the pandemic. With learning loss experienced from the shutdown of March, 2020 to the end of the 2020-21 school year, and the transiency of students switching between off-campus and in person learning in 2020-21 as well as extensive quarantine situations across the district, the benchmark set was not met in all areas; however, good improvement was shown in many areas from mid-year to the end of the year. The data gathered will be used in PLC meetings to help improve student success and outcomes into the future.

B. Wisconsin RtI Center Recognized Schools

Ms. Filtz shared information around the Wisconsin RtI Center recognizing Grove Elementary, Mead Elementary, THINK Academy, Washington Elementary, and Lincoln High School at the Bronze level for their work toward fully implementing a Response to Intervention system that leads to improved student outcomes.

V. Consent Agenda Items

- ES-1 Masking Mitigation Strategy Modifications**
- ES-2 Pupil Academic Standards for 2021-22**
- ES-3 Renaissance Learning Purchase Contract**
- ES-4 SEL-Life Tools Grant**
- ES-5 Healthy Schools (b.e.s.t.) Grant Application**
- ES-6 Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Grant Application**
- ES-7 Gifted and Talented Educational Services Plan**
- ES-8 Schedule Modification to Implement Professional Learning Community Meeting Time**

VI. Future Agenda Items/Information Requests

Agenda items are determined by the Committee Chair after consultation with appropriate administration depending upon other agenda items, presentation information, and agenda availability.

Future agenda items/information requests include, but are not limited to:

- Seclusion and Restraint (August)
- Parent CII Representatives (September)
- ESSA Update (September)
- ACP Update (October)

Mr. Krings adjourned the meeting at 7:27 p.m.