

**ALLIANCE FOR HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION
COVID-19 Committee
Conference Call**

**April 28, 2020
10:00 A.M.**

MEETING SUMMARY

In attendance on phone conference: Jessica Voltolini, Tony Podojil, guest Kevin Miller (BASA), and member representatives from 45 school districts.

Tony Podojil convened the meeting by phone conference at 10:00 a.m.

ODE Stakeholder Call – Update

Education Recovery Plan Framework -ODE

Tony shared that Paolo indicated on this week’s stakeholder call that ODE is close to completing their Education Recovery Plan Framework. That document will list the key components that districts will need to consider as they think about transitioning back to school next year. From what we have seen in the draft, the document better reflects the issues and not necessarily the specifics of how to address those issues.

For example, under the section health and safety measures, the document states districts need to collaborate with their local Health Departments to plan social distancing guidelines for their buildings and classrooms but, doesn’t provide specifics in terms of what social distancing measures are appropriate. Districts have been looking for ODE to provide more specific context around how to operate transportation, food service and athletics in this new environment.

Tony shared that Scott Hunt of ODE, is meeting with the Health Department today. The sooner we can get guidance around what is necessary to open buildings the sooner we will be able to order the materials and the supplies needed to begin planning that opening. The longer it takes to get that guidance the harder it is for us to know how to proceed. Mask, gloves, cleaning materials, hand washing stations, what to do about buses and transportation all require guidance of how the Health Department wants things done. We hope to see guidance in the document form next week.

Governor Phase 1 Guidelines

Before the call we sent the Governor’s phase one guidelines via email to members, which gives some ideas of what might be required for schools. Such as,

- 50% capacity based on the fire code in terms of how many individuals can occupy a space.
- every employee and any customer coming into that establishment needs to wear a mask

- daily cleaning requirements
- what to do when you identify someone who has symptoms
- mass gathering restrictions of no more than 10 people remain in place post May 1st

Even with that guidance in place we realize districts still have questions about practical things such as:

- how much hand cleaner
- what kind of disinfectant
- where do I get mask for students and in sizes for children?
- where are the PPE supplies coming from?
- What happens if orders are delayed or cannot be bought timely
- What happens if a district cannot open because they do not have the right materials in order to get the building up and running in the time frame that the Governor's office requires

Questions:

Q. With smaller class sizes of 12, alternating days, alternating schedules, is anyone thinking of the impact on a family with a first grader and a 5th grader and a 9th grader and/or special needs child, can have a Monday, Wednesday morning for one child, and a Tuesday, Thursday afternoon for another--- running buses four trips, trying to serve lunch and breakfast somewhere in there and maintain social distance, what is the likelihood that trying to put a schedule that meets those needs is doable?

A. As of now, in the absence of guidance from the Health Department, schools are trying to figure out what their options are locally. Depending upon what the guidelines might provide, how to deliver alternative delivery options for instruction and course scheduling should become clearer in the future.

Q. There are a group of superintendents that are informing the Governor, do we know who this group is, so that we can better understand the scope of their involvement, the breadth of their experience and level of diversity within that group in terms of the types of districts they represent? Can they be identified? I feel like we are missing an opportunity with our state organizations on forming the guardrails we need, which will allow for us determining what is doable and what is not. Why aren't we developing our own white paper and creating the guardrails instead of waiting for the guardrails to be developed?

A. Alliance Executive Committee members Todd Hoadley and Paul Imhoff have been selected to participate on calls with the Governor's office along with the Ohio Department of Education led by John Richard and Scott Hunt of ODE and superintendents David James of Akron, Doug Morrow of Ashland, Elizabeth Lolli of Dayton, Eric Gordon of Cleveland, Jeff Layton of Northwestern Schools, Joe Chaddock of Stark County ESC, Stephanie Starcher of Fort Frye, and Devin Babcock from the Governor's office.

They have been working to develop guidance on a document that will address a wide range of topics that need to be considered by school districts as they transition back and prepare for the opening of the 20-21 school year. This is the document that Paolo has indicated the department has been working on.

Tony and Jessica also participate in calls on Mondays at 4pm with ODE that has probably 50 representatives consisting of education organizations across the state. We have tried to use those calls to confirm the issue districts are facing, suggesting a timeline and conveying the frustration districts feel about not having clarity from the Health Department.

Budget – Care Funding/Reductions to FY20

Q. How much money will my district have or not have and how does that impact my staffing needs going forward?

A. Tony and Jessica will send updates as we receive them from ODE regarding how funding will flow as a result of the federal CARES Act. 489 million dollars has been allocated with 90% of which is going to flow to LEAs through Title 1 formula funding calculations. That money is expected to be moving sooner than later but the department is still waiting for additional guidance. The Governor's discretionary funds are still being decided on how those will be issued. There could be some budget reductions this year, with some reductions expected for the next school year.

Legislative Planning- Priorities (List Attached)

Based on the calls with the COVID-19 and Executive Committees, a legislative list is being developed with respect to addressing summer concerns, HR, employee collective bargaining issues and the flexibility that will be needed in the upcoming school year. Tony and Jessica will be highlighting these concerns for the Legislature and work to address them when they return next week. They indicated they will be talking with Chairman Jones from the House Education Committee tomorrow and are waiting for the Senate to return next week.

Questions and follow up

Q. Have we heard any news on the fall sports season starting August 1st?

A. In Respect to the fall sports season, Tony has reached out to Jerry Snodgrass of OSHAA to participate in a conversation with our members, we are waiting on a time to schedule.

Q. When I look at what the Governor said yesterday, about general office being open on the 4th and you have to wear masks, does that apply under the use of facility, staff returning to work, do I go into the office and wear a mask the entire day that I'm at the office? How is that interpreted for school?

A. The Governor's office stated school offices were always able to be open so nothing has changed, you can require your administrative staff to come into the office same as the original closing order. In terms of masks, more guidance is needed in terms of general office use.

Q. We're getting pushback that people want to continue to work from home so we're trying to come up with a plan for what we need through the end of the year but have a lot of questions related to social distancing and whether we can even make them come in. What guidance can the Governor provide? I would like to know what the other districts are facing and what they are doing.

A. Some districts indicated that they are requiring employees to wear masks and will continue that requirement thru end of year for those employees still working in the facilities. Some are also providing gloves for the staff that choose to come in. They are also taking temperatures and recording those in a log.

Q. Is anyone getting any pushback from your unions about taking staff temperatures? We tried when they first came out with that from the Governor and that was a no from our union, my guess is they might not fight the Mask if we provide them?

A. This is something to discuss with your union and local health department.

Q. Can you add to school facilities, public access? Once we open these buildings up, we all have policies about how outside groups have access to the buildings through our rental policies, I think the consensus is we just want to open the buildings for school purposes only. Outside groups would cause more cleaning and more monitoring to do so, not sure where we get a clarification on that, but we need to find out who to talk to on building issues.

A. Kevin Miller stated this is on BASA's list of Legislative recommendations requesting that they suspend 3313.76 and ultimately leave that up to the local Board of Education and Superintendent even if the state Department of Health and Governor would lift restrictions.

Q. How are people going to handle parent volunteers and other people in the buildings once we are able to open?

A. Districts have requested that the boards be provided flexibility in how they decide to handle the use of volunteers. The need to help staff with groups of students due to social distancing guidelines may be necessary.

Q. Have district's concerns around staff expressing a concern about returning to work due to unsafe conditions been addressed?

A. We are working to get clarification on 4167.06 which specifies the conditions by which employees can refuse to report to work if they believe their work environment is an unsafe situation due to a pandemic. Under that code, they can request the district to reimburse them for their job until the unsafe conditions are rectified.

Q. Can we also include OTES and OPES flexibility for this year and next? Any data available from this year or next year will be tainted based on the changes to the testing system and the impact on student achievement due to the changes in instructional delivery.

What is the total number of dollars that it cost to administer tests and what our contract is with the state of Ohio to ensure accountability? What is the impact that the pandemic has had on achievement with students? Should we be suspending, for whatever time period that seems appropriate, the testing program. I'm curious to gauge the General Assembly's temperature related to functioning without any testing information.

A. We do not think they will suspend testing for two to three years. Feedback from some superintendent's is they would like to continue the assessment testing because that informs our instructions, they just do not want high school accountability like EdChoice, Vouchers and academic distress connected to it.

Q. If we're restricted in terms of how to transport students by bus because of reduced ridership, how do we navigate those conversations with private and parochial schools who may or may not be on the same schedules we're on and how are they going to work with us so we can get all students to school at the appropriate times?

A. This may be an item that we will need a legislative change that would allow districts to take the lead when determining changes to bus routes.

Q. I'm having a Community Transition meeting with the fire department, the police department, Chamber, the City Manager, my business manager and our parochial schools to talk about how we can stay on the same page, one of the things that's going to come up at that meeting will be working with the Health Department. Can I infer from this conversation that the Health Department is going to work with ODE and that we should not try to engage the local Health Department, should we just try to wait or try to work with our health departments now?

A. For now, I would encourage talking to your local Health Department and see what they can tell you right now, as we await clarity from the state and ODE.

Q. Some parents need schools to resume so that people can go back to work, including our own staff. Do you think we are eventually going to be part of that conversation because it is an impediment to moving people back to work?

A. I think we are going to get inserted into that conversation soon.

Q. We are hearing a little bit about some Legislators that are not in agreement with the Governor and the Ohio Department of Health and want things opened up quicker. Is that more rhetoric to appease constituents or are there some behind the scene plans to have the General Assembly take a more active role in influencing the Governor and the Ohio Department of Health?

A. The House Republicans and the Speaker have been vocal this week about disagreeing with DeWine's reopening plan. They want businesses open sooner so that is accurate. The Legislators start coming back next week, I would anticipate as the House and Senate work in May and June that they potentially will try to pass provisions in legislation that might challenge the Governor's Executive Orders as it relates to closures and reopening the economy.

Q. There has been a lot of chatter on graduation after the Department put out their guidelines, we still are under the ten-person gathering rule. I don't think anyone was planning graduations in May, most in June or July but if that order is still in place, it is going to be pretty restrictive on what you can and cannot do as far as large gatherings. There has been pushback around holding virtual graduations. How are districts thinking about this concern and is anyone considering actually going to a facility and doing what?

A. Some districts plan to do a virtual graduation. Some are considering parades. Some are having a virtual graduation with an in-person graduation opportunity next summer. Some are holding out for a later date option in June or July. Some would like to use outdoor stadiums or football fields where they can keep social distancing rules. Some are doing a mixture of virtual with a parade, taking pictures on a makeshift stage, livestream speeches, putting signs up around the city for every student on the main streets and some will be delivering diplomas with buses handing diplomas out to kids and then families can join a parade. Some have hired a production and video company and will have one car per family that will drive into the parking lot with video boards, it will last about 45 minutes with remote speeches to celebrate graduation.

Next Conference Call:

The next call will be **May 5, 2020, at 10 AM by phone conference.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.