

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

July 28, 2020

10:00 A.M.

MEETING SUMMARY

In attendance on phone conference: Tony Podojil, Jessica Voltolini, guest Dan Leffingwell from OHSAA, and member representatives from 47 school districts.

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

State Health Requirements – COVID19

- Fall Sports and Student Activities – OHSAA
- Summit County Public Health Letter to Administrators

Q and A with Dan Leffingwell:

Q. Will fall contact sports begin as usual?

A. There is still the question of whether contact sports will be allowed or not, but our most recent advice has been that we would go ahead and begin as usual with no outside competition allowed. OHSSA will be speaking with the Governor's office later today: they had meetings with him on Sunday, the feedback received thus far is of moving forward with a traditional start and any guidelines or limitations to that start are yet to be determined.

Q. What if we are not to allow contact sports?

A. Just asking this question yesterday was vastly different than some of the feedback that we received over the weekend. We are waiting on a couple of things, feedback from membership and feedback from the Governor's office. Once we have that we are ready to go with guidelines and supports for school.

Q. Has OHSSA thought about different plans for each level?

A. The full protocols and things like that are changing it seems like daily if not hourly and every time we think we are going in one direction; we end up going in another. From our conversations with the OHSSA office staff, I believe we have formal plans or pretty solid plans ready to go no matter what scenario, whether that's a go on August 1 or a delayed start or move in the spring.

Q. Is the Governor's office aware of the time crunch that we are on now?

A. The Governor's office is certainly aware of the time crunch that we are all very sensitive to and are trying to make plans for the fall. He is concerned with crowd management, people management, and teams, all those kinds of things and of our time frame. Last I spoke to the office, the Governor's office was in favor of a "traditional" start.

Q. When do we think the Governor's office will say something about August 1?

A. I am hopeful, as soon as possible this week. I have a scheduled call with the Governor today. I want that same information and ideas as everyone wants, so we are trying to push him ASAP to let us know where the office stands. I wanted to make sure as a board member, we were representing the majority at minimum of our membership, even though that survey just went out yesterday. I felt like it was important to see what our members wanted or did not want, what they were comfortable or not with in regard to restart. As that data continues to come in, we are sharing that information with the Governor's office.

Comment: Wooster City: We're struggling in this community, and I am sure others, to see what we are doing from an academic perspective versus what we are doing athletically. We have tried to follow and support OHSSA but as it is getting closer to August 1st, we are struggling to do that. We have a face covering policy in our particular district, we are in a hybrid schedule, and you've got a lot of school districts that are going fully remote but then at 3:00, let's go play football and the community is really struggling with that. We need to think a little bit more innovatively about what sports can happen right now, during the fall. Golf is out there playing, right now, and they are not struggling yet we are trying to figure out football. In our community, if we try to run football now and there is any sort of prevalence with COVID then we are trying to deal with everyone who is symptomatic, so we would much rather push that to the spring. Instead of just conversation around are we having it or not can we think creatively and maybe just change timing.

Comment: Bay Village: Our community is worried that our students will begin to come down with the virus and then impact our academic start to the school year. We do not have support with contact tracing, so it is literally central office trying to handle everything that is happening. I think there are some ways that we can keep everybody engaged for children to stay active but there does not seem to be a big support for that, at least a delay should be a consideration.

Comment: Lucas County: We have a meeting tomorrow, the Lucas County school districts, our health Department and representatives from private and public schools and we are having a conversation about this as well. I know where it is going, which is going to be they would like to see us delay or cancel fall sports, period, in my district. We have several students that are either in quarantine and or are positive along with coaches and that might be a phenomenon just here in Lucas County but we are continuing to see numbers rise and spread within our specific community.

Comment: Medina City Schools: It is a little frustrating that we are referencing a traditional start to the athletic season with probably very few schools in the state that is looking at anything like a traditional start for the school year. I think a little more innovation put in place as to looking at how we can adjust seasons. I agree with the idea of what sports can occur safely and which ones cannot.

Dan's Response: I think working creatively and innovatively are important, quite frankly and even though it was late, I think that is the importance of the survey information. The information we get back is to measure where we are as a whole, and I do not say this to be argumentative I just say that is a fact. Everything that has just been said really resonates 100% but understand that message is completely different if your county is yellow and at level 1 so one of the issues that we have is balancing the reality of those comments you just made and other districts opinions as well.

Comment: Hamilton County: Our level is heightened but we have been practicing for 9 weeks, had two cases and zero spread. We did a survey with our families and over 90% of them were supportive of our kids returning to fall sports.

Comment: Twinsburg: We've all had athletes on our campuses probably since the middle of June doing conditioning. It is not the same level of play that happens effective August 1st when you start to put your football team in helmets and pads. August 1st is a whole different level of contact and in Summit County we have been working with our health department on a document, released last Friday, that would suggest that high contact sports like football be moved to an October 1st start time. I have a very conservative Board of Education here who supports sports but are very concerned about the spread of this virus at the same time. So, our thinking is if we are going to start next week, it should just be for sports like golf and tennis where it is low risk low impact per the county Board of Health.

Q. Am I hearing you say that a lot of the guidance that is going to come out of OHSAA is going to be based upon the survey? It sounds like a vote or something that you are going to look at per County so will you say these counties were in this situation and should be considering this, I get the guidance part but I'm trying to picture the guidance that could come out from there.

A. I'm interested to know what our membership feels so for example we sitting around that table and debate why we don't feel like it's a good idea to move football to the spring but how do we make that opinion without knowing what the majority of our members feel. If there are 70% of schools out there that feel that way then we need to know that because it's really easy to sit there and represent yourself, your district, you're county, so it's really important to know what the whole membership lands on most of these concepts or where do we land in a framework to contact sports. If contact sports are not allowed what is our alternative and those types of things I wanted to know as I was just uncomfortable making a decision for 850 plus member schools without asking where you stood.

Comment: I think it is complicated by the fact that August 1 is this weekend and decisions need to be made now and OHSAA has been giving feedback to the administration and that the survey just came out. I think that is why it is confusing for members.

Dan's Response: I agree, and I will respond by saying I would rather have your feedback late than never had it at all. I apologize that we did not get that out sooner but quite frankly the fact that the Governor's office has yet to give us the direction that we have been looking for, we felt like better late than never.

Q. There are a couple of districts that are going fully online the first 9 weeks and they are not having any activities outside of their academic program which means no athletic. How is OHSSA going to deal with districts who voluntarily drop out of the fall offerings?

A. Again, trying to figure out first and foremost who is participating and who is not is this first piece of information that we need, if we contended in the fall without some districts the likelihood is that might involve some reclassification. It might involve some looking at tournament numbers by classification, obviously that would be different, I certainly would not support anything that would penalize those schools or be punitive in regard to their future participation in membership. (Jeff) If schools did decide not to participate it would not go against them but there is a requirement per school year in order to maintain their membership but I know that would not be the case where they would be penalized at all.

Comment: Several schools will not have athletics if they do not have in school learning.

Q. If this thing does move forward has there been any conversation at the OHSAA board level about being able to do contact sports with an expiration on July 31 if that gets continued and as the threshold that has to be met has there been conversation on how schools should actually do what's written in the order with the testing because our county health department is saying that is impossible right now.

Q. On July 10th the Governor made a statement that the next 30 days will determine whether Friday night football was played or not, so that goes past August 1st, has there been any conversation about what he said like are we expecting something that may not be coming by August 1st?

A. (Jeff) I can talk about the testing piece of it. In every communication that we've had with the Governor's office and Department of Health, we have pretty much said if testing is going to be a piece of the contact sports moving forward then we need to reevaluate it as there's no way that anyone of us or very few of us would be able to afford the testing piece that's required as the contact rules are written now, so obviously that would be something to discuss. (Dan) The last conversation I was involved in, if those requirements remain in place than that in itself would make the decision that we cannot move forward.

A. As far as the Friday Night Football comment as mentioned earlier we pretty much have told the Governor we need an answer as soon as we possibly can, hopefully this week. If we do not have an answer very soon, I mean we will not have any choice because we do not have the answers we need to proceed moving forward.

Q. Is there a possibility that the Alliance could do a bit of its own survey so the Executive Committee of the Alliance would have some data?

A. We certainly could do that, I wanted to do this call first to see what the consensus was for at least the people on the call. We have a fluent conversation going on but, we are up against a deadline. It is this week and unfortunately, we have been to this place before. Dan and Jeff have already heard that probably from his Superintendent that the issue that you are having as superintendents is that we struggle to try to figure out restart with hybrid situations of half the kids coming in and half not coming in, cleaning protocols, all the things we're doing on buses to protect kids and that all goes out the window to then have them playing high contact sports, it's hard to reconcile that argument with your own community. It is putting districts in a dilemma of saying one thing about rules in a classroom and a whole other set of criteria for kids when they are outside of that classroom.

Q. Did the survey go to superintendents or to high school principals?

A. It went to all. There is an identifier asking what your position is, principal, superintendent or who is responding. It also asks you to identify your district so we can disaggregate some of this data and some of the thoughts and opinions so we are trying to leverage that to make decisions best represented by our entire membership. We are listening, we are trying to gather feedback, and we are trying to represent the majority of our members.

Comments from Jeff: There are a lot of things to look for if we were to move sports around. We must roll out a plan as to what sports look like because if things are delayed or if things flip districts are going to have a ton of things to do in order to prep for the change. Say we move football to the spring does that mean you're moving baseball and softball to the fall and if so have you hired your baseball and softball coaches yet and are they certified, obviously there's a lot of things to look at and we would have loved to have these decisions made a month ago to make our lives a little easier but that just wasn't what was happening so trust me we understand the situation. I am sitting in my chair thinking if I play baseball this fall, I do not even have a schedule yet then I have to get together with the people in my league and that takes time.

Comment: Then some districts have MOU's that have the supplemental contracts tied to dates too so any delay or any instituted date you're going to trigger costs associated with peoples contracts being either partially paid or paid in full for this particular season.

ODE Guidance Documents

- Preschool Issues (Current Restrictions)
- Funding – CARES ACT additional Fund Distribution

Preschool Issues - (Current Restrictions)

There have not been any updates released related to the preschool issues discussed earlier. Jessica will send out updates as she receives them.

Funding

- CARES ACT additional Fund Distribution

Districts were sent a spreadsheet containing information on the additional fund distributions based on the CARES Act which those funds are to cover PPE supplies.

Next Conference Call:

The next call will be **August 4, 2020, at 10 AM by phone conference, if needed.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.