

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

**July 7, 2020
10:00 A.M.**

MEETING SUMMARY

In attendance on phone conference: Jessica Voltolini, Tony Podojil, and member representatives from 41 school districts.

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

ODE Stakeholder Call – 7/6/2020

Paolo announced that this was the last stakeholder call for the summer and the group would reconvene when necessary in the future. He shared that districts should see the guidance related to remote learning and e-attendance on either Wednesday or Thursday this week. He also gave an update on the 20-21 school foundation payments and additional COVID 19 Care disbursements. Those are updated below.

Reset & Restart-Education Planning Guide for Ohio Schools and Districts

- Health Requirements Document
- Masks, Transportation, Cleaning Requirements

Questions and Comments:

Mask:

Q. With the need to establish a policy around mask, has anyone reached out to NEOLA to see if they have a policy statement? Has anyone talked to your policy team or any of your school attorneys?

A. Scot Prebles stated in the Cincinnati area, Hamilton County, they had a draft policy that was presented to them by their ESC. A copy of the Hamilton County ESC document was sent to members via email during the call.

Q. Is that something your area is considering or are you going to be building from that document making decisions locally? How are you using that?

A. The document was based on shared commentary down here, it is a draft, you can then add other things that would be local decisions.

Q. How are you approaching putting that policy together? Are you taking it to your board? I am assuming you will need board approval.

A. I am seeking affirmation from my board on the reopening of schools as opposed to a full-fledged vote since conditions seem to be changing weekly. We are planning to go back to a full traditional schedule with face masks for all students and staff. We have plans for transportation

ridership and we have rearranged all our buildings to maintain social distancing guidelines. We do not have traditional furniture, so we have schematics that fit our new rooms. It is going to change overtime a little and it is difficult to get local health officials to put a stamp of approval on anything right now.

Comment: If you are changing your back to school plan to include a calendar change, check with legal counsel to see if there is a requirement to do a 30-day present to public posting. Any calendar change may require board action/public notice.

Comments: Several members said their local department of Health will not approve plans or give them a yes or no to parts of the plans. Basically, they are giving us all the flexibility we want by saying you have the guidelines and work within those guidelines. Other members said their health commissioners are on their weekly calls and may approve the plans. There may be some variation depending on the regions and the makeup of those counties where there may be more commonality among the districts and in a little more backing by the health Department.

Q. Has anyone heard if OEA or unions as there seems to be a growing concern statewide, nationwide, about returning to school and the hurdles when working with our collective bargaining groups?

A. In Columbus we have heard concerns on every stakeholder call, in terms of the safety issues for staff.

Q. Has anyone heard of a demand of not coming back to work?

A. We have heard questions about change in work conditions, classroom size, FMLA, provisions for remote learning, and similar questions.

Transportation

Q. Are people going back to full capacity with mask or are they doing some variations?

A. Some districts are waiting to see if more guidance is coming before they decide. Some districts are starting with one student per seat unless they have additional family members they can sit with. Some districts are changing requirements from one or two miles before transportation by bus is offered. Some districts are allowing 2 students per seat with mask.

Comment: The pending release of the Transportation guidance document from ODE is not on ridership. It is guidance in terms of your interaction and your obligations to transport all students in your area, so the issues around private and parochial transportation and routing are still in effect and you are still held to finding a way to meet all students needs in this area.

You can expect ODE to release a transportation guidance document early next week along with a letter from the state Superintendent regarding current transportation rules remaining in effect for transporting students.

Temperature Checks:

Q. Are we supposed to check temperatures at school or is the guidance for parents to do it and report to the school?

A. The Governor said repeatedly that the only mandate in that document is the order related to having every adult in the building being required to wear a mask. That is the order which leaves everything else in as guidance. If you perceive a student needs a temperature check, you will need to do that as part of your mitigation strategy. Parents may have help with this process by conducting temperature checks before going to the bus stop. School will then have their own procedures for adults and students when they enter the school.

Comment:

We will distribute NEOLA policy guidelines on masks as soon as we see something from them. Policy guidelines need to be adopted by your board, that's part of the order.

ODE Guidance Documents

- Blended Learning vs Remote Learning Guidance (Pending)

ODE does recognize that remote and blended learning need to co-exist and they do not want districts to discard their blended learning plans. There is a way to incorporate blended learning plans into the remote learning document. This information will be part of the guidance coming out this week and will meet the requirements based on HB164. Attendance for remote learning will be part of that guidance but we are not sure that part will be coming out Thursday but that will be out quickly after.

Transportation Guidance (Pending)

Paolo said the goal was have this document out soon.

Preschool Guidelines - (Current Restrictions)

There have been no changes to the June 9th order in the State Board of Education emergency rules, but they are getting a lot of feedback from everyone on preschool issues concerning the ratios and LRE. They are aware of the staffing issues and room concerns. I would encourage anyone who still wants to communicate the impact of that emergency rule on your district to communicate that to the governor's office.

Sports Programs

OHSAA is having a leadership transition, Jerry Snodgrass is stepping down as Executive Director. Bob Goldring is the acting Executive Director. It was announced that they are doing a national search for a new director. Also, they are working on guidance related to the sports programs for the fall season which starts on August 1st. We hope to see guidance soon.

Funding

- FY21 Budget – Based on FY20 Budget Levels (Flat Funding)
- CARES ACT Resources – Beyond Initial Fund Distribution

Paolo clarified that for FY21 budget, ODE will still be basing foundations payments based on the final FY20 budget levels. There will be a flat funding approach going forward with the caveat that may change during the year. At present, there is no way of knowing until we start seeing how the revenue numbers come. Right now, the guidance being given is that FY 21 funding levels will remain the same in terms of the reductions that everyone took in FY20, that includes the adjustments made by Dolan's amendment.

Also, there are additional funds available from the CARES ACT that the Governor talked using in terms covering additional PPE cost to districts. Paolo said he could not share anything specifically but would be able to give an update by the end of the month.

Legislative update:

Liability and Sovereign immunity continue to be a major issue for school districts as you prepare for reopening next school year. When Tony testified on SB320, our testimony was focused on the need for additional protection for schools with respect to what districts were hearing from their insurance providers. SB320 has not had any additional hearing since we testified 2 weeks ago but we are going to continue to work with the legislature, in the fall, on COVID-19 related issues with immunity being one of them.

There are several bills that has been moving its way through the legislative process, HB606 and SB308 with respect to civil liability and immunity which would provide some additional general liability protection to public entities. HB606 did pass in the Senate last week, there were some amendments meaning it now must go back to the House for concurrence. It would provide some additional protection but only through December of 2020.

Jessica is not sure if it addresses any of the issues that the insurance providers have identified for districts but that bill is pending a House concurrence vote and right now the House is not scheduled to come back in town until September. Jessica will keep us posted on HB606 but one of our priorities with the legislature will be to continue to focus on sovereign immunity for districts for the next full year.

Q. The Family First Leave Act wasn't an issue before but it provides opportunities for people to be able to take paid leave for child care issues if your child care is closed down because of a COVID-19 or if your child's school is on a different kind of schedule than yours and you can't find child care for your child. Can we investigate this in terms of the staffing challenges we may have?

A. I think there are going to be additional provisions to address this in the fall and how to best use these provisions to maintain staffing levels.

Next Conference Call:

The next call will be **July 14, 2020, at 10 AM by phone conference, if needed.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.