



Legislative/Systems Improvement Committee

October 14, 2020

9:00 a.m.

Meeting Summary

In attendance on the Zoom conference: Tony Podojil, Jessica Voltolini, and members from 45 school districts.

Tony Podojil convened the meeting at 9:02 a.m. The primary focus of the meeting was to update the committee on COVID-19 quarantine concerns, legislative updates, and report card revisions.

I. COVID-19 Quarantine Concerns.

Tom Hosler provided the committee with an update on the conference calls he participated in with the Governor's office. Highlights of the call are listed below:

- Discussions focused on the issues school districts are having with getting students back in school (when a student or teacher test positive or has been quarantined more than once).
- Families are concerned with how many times a student can be placed on quarantine and the effect it is having on the student academically.
- There have been limited incidents of students acquiring COVID because of their attendance at school, it is usually from activities outside of school.
- Parents are cooperating with the school districts now, but there is concern that if quarantine continues more than once, districts will lose that partnership with the parents.
- There have been discussions with ODH on possibly modifying the rules on is identified to be quarantined.
- The Governor announced that a study conducted by Ohio State on how rapid test could be used with students and teachers, to reduce the quarantine window.
- The Governor suggested that a study on the Rapid test could be done using pilot districts to implement the test and develop procedures/policies.
- Participants voiced concern over the social/emotional/academic needs of the students being home. Such as depression, suicide prevention, and isolation.
- It was important for all participants to focus on finding a balance between managing outbreaks in our communities and schools while also addressing the need to have students attend school in person to maintain their well-being and mental health.

Jonathan Cooper provided feedback from the calls that he participated in with the Governor's office.

- He suggested that each district reach out to their local health department and ask them to consider the social and emotional aspects with students when making quarantining decisions.
- He stated the Governor's office is open to looking at data the districts collect, regarding the quarantine, testing and family feedback.
- There is concern on the economic impact for families with students being quarantined, both in terms of duration and frequency.
- Issues related to identify students in need of help and the level of concern regarding student's mental health and suicide prevention.
- Concern over the student abuse reports being low, when school districts know those reports should be higher.
- Concern over the students that are not being accounted for and their safety, how that affects the district, and how to get them online or in class.

Jonathan had some suggestions to help districts with quarantine issues that he is trying in his district:

- Allow students to pick their seat ----if you have been in one quarantine you then have the right to pick your seat in the classroom.
- Safe room---one space large enough for students to go in and out for class, if they have been quarantined before.
- Post season competition quarantine---apply for remote learning for 2 weeks and self-quarantine for sports post season play. Band may also request option. Staffing is done via the regular teacher.

Districts questions and concerns:

- Students are displaying stress over being quarantined and being quarantined more than once.
- Districts would like to see if the 3ft distancing can be used if both parties are wearing a mask and there is no room for a 6ft distance.
- Local Health Departments are issuing different rulings making it difficult when one county establishes a practice and the county adjacent institutes something different. This impacts staff who make work in an adjoining county where rules related to quarantining may be different.
- It would be helpful for the Ohio Department of Health to give out statewide instructions for consistency among districts in certain areas. Parents are confused when something is being enforced in one school district but not in an adjacent district.
- If we use rapid testing, local health departments could look at the numbers and make the call to let the distance move from 6ft to 3ft legally so each local office can be flexible.
- Parents could have a choice of the Rapid test, testing on day one and then again on day 7 while remaining in school. If the student does not test positive, the student can return to their regular class or parents can decide to have the student stay home for 14 days instead of the rapid test, with remote learning.
- Some districts were told in Franklin county that the N95 mask are not required and others were told if the teachers wear surgical grade(level 1, level 2, or level 3) mask and stay a 6 foot distance from the person that has tested positive for COVID, the teacher is not required to be quarantined and can remain at work. It was stated that the teachers need to be trained on how to put surgical or N95 mask on and off and have it fit correctly.

II. Legislative Update.

Jessica shared that the primary focus at the Statehouse has been on the Nuclear Energy Repeal and Replace Bill (HB6) and the upcoming November 3rd election. Due to term limited seats we will see several new members in the House and half of the Senators up for election. Jessica will keep everyone posted on the election results and what can be done after the election.

Speaker Cupp is finalizing HB305 on school funding, it is his goal to get the bill through Lane Duck, which is the week following the November 3rd election, and out of the House by the end of the year. The Alliance will be supportive of HB305 to the extent that it aligns with the Alliance's priorities for school funding. Several components are built in the bill that will benefit several of the districts and some that will not. It must be looked at overall to determine how it will affect each district.

Lane Duck will focus on several things on a TBD basis depending on how COVID cases rise in the winter months but they are hoping to continue to work on getting things done for the fall that will provide flexibility of the testing issues, extension of some of the COVID related flexibility provisions in HB197. Jessica and Tony continue to work on with the Senate, the House and the Governor's office.

The Senate Education Committee will continue to work on SB358, the provisions on waving state test will likely make it out of committee. Some components of the COVID flexibility relief package should be passed in Lane Duck although it may not be through SB358., It is unlikely we will see a waiver of state testing this year.

EdChoice and Report Card Reform are still pending and were not resolved because of COVID but those conversations will continue, Jessica will keep members posted.

Report Card Reform is a priority that we will be working over the next 3 to 9 months. We are continuing to have conversations with the educational organizations, Fordham, Ohio Excels, and Urban 8. We will need to work on revisions for each component as well as the overall rating system. We will discuss what to use in place of letter grades, (star or number systems) while maintaining the federal requirements, which states that 3 groups need to be identified. (the bottom 5 % the next 15% and then everyone else). We need to show meaningful differential between the 3 of those.

Other Notes:

- CCIP note for federal funding from the Cares Act for private and parochial schools clarifies how funding can be directed to those entities.
- Assessment and Gifted guidelines have been updated on the ODE website. Please send any questions to Tony.

Annual Meeting for 2020:

The Alliance's Annual Meeting will be November 9, 2020 at 11:30 a.m., a request for attendees has gone out to member districts.

IV. Next Meeting.

The next meeting, TBD.

The meeting adjourned at 10:09 a.m.