



## Brevard Public Schools

### July 30, 2020 Board Work Session (Metrics for Reopening)

BPS continues to modify its meeting processes in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Community in-person attendance will not be permitted; but the meeting will be livestreamed through normal channels for viewing in real time.

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The Board met in a special Board work session on Thursday, July 30, 2020 to discuss the establishment of metrics and mask requirements. Notice of the work session was advertised in the Thursday, July 23, 2020 edition of Florida Today. An affidavit of publication is available in the Board office.

**Date: Jul 30 2020 (11:00 a.m.)**

#### Opening Exercises

##### [1. Opening Exercises](#)

Chairman Misty Belford called the meeting to order at: 11:00 a.m.

#### Roll Call

##### [2. Roll Call](#)

Members Present: Misty Belford, Cheryl McDougall, Tina Descovich, Matt Susin and Katye Campbell

#### Pledge of Allegiance

##### [3. Pledge of Allegiance](#)

Chairman Belford led the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### Order of Business

##### **Order of Business**

##### [4. Presentation by Department of Health](#)

Maria Stahl, Department of Health administrator, began a presentation to go over the Health Department's data dashboard and explained the importance of looking at trends. She stated that Brevard's hospital capacity is good and that we remain stable. The number of deaths from COVID - 19 have increased, although that number was primarily in the long term care health facilities. Ms. Stahl stressed the importance of staying home if you are sick; wearing masks if you are unable to maintain social distancing; avoiding groups of larger than 10 and hand hygiene for mitigating the spread.

Epidmiologist Barry Inman said that it is very important for the public to get the flu vaccine so that they do not have to deal with the flu on top of COVID. He said that COVID is very transmittable with an incubation period of usually between 3 to 6 days. Most outbreaks are the result of someone coming to work sick and it is more transmittable inside than out. Social distancing with masks is effective in mitigating the spread along with hand hygiene.

Board members asked clarifying questions about the data that had been presented as well as testing procedures and reporting. Some questions arose about flu vaccines being available to all employees and whether or not they would be able to receive at the individual schools. Dr. Thedy, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Human Resources Officer, said she would get that information for the Board. Board members asked about transmission of the virus from children. Dr. Inman said that it appears that younger children are not as likely to spread the virus. However, he again stressed the importance of masks and handwashing to mitigate the spread.

When asked about the reopening plan put into place for schools; Ms. Stahl said she thinks the plan is solid. She stated that there will be cases though.

## [5. Metrics for Reopening Schools](#)

For clarity, Chairman Belford stated that there were two items to be discussed; masks as well as metrics. She began by asking each Board member to state whether or not they wanted to keep the language regarding face coverings to the current language of expected or to modify.

**Responses:**

- Susin - Modify
- Campbell - Keep current language
- Descovich - Satisfied with current language, but could adjust for age brackets
- McDougall - Modify
- Belford - Modify

Chairman Belford asked for Mr. Susin to bring forth his recommendation and then the Board can begin discussions from that. Mr. Susin said that he would like to modify the mask language. He said he hinges his decision on making masks mandatory on the fact that if a school is closed, we negatively impact our students, our parents and our workforce and it is proven that masks mitigate the spread. He would also like to ask District staff to weigh in as well.

Ms. McDougall said that what they heard from the Health Department is that the spread can be mitigated by masks, social distancing, handwashing and no large groups. Masks are a vital component of slowing the spread.

Ms. Descovich stated that if the Board was going to move toward making masks mandatory, exceptions and discipline had to be spelled out. It needs to be clearly defined when it can be taken off if it is going to be mandated.

Ms. Belford said she doesn't want to get hung up on semantics. Her main goals are results and what the outcomes are. Everyone agrees that school is important for our students and their families for a variety of reasons. She continued that if they truly believe that, they need to do everything in their power to minimize the likelihood of closing schools down again. She was on the fence about where to go on this issue until a couple of things: 1. It seems very clear to her from the emails she had been receiving that many people are interpreting expected to mean optional. and 2. She had visited a couple of schools during the summer programs and it appears that expected is optional which is concerning to her. She absolutely supports mandated or required masks with exceptions.

While Ms. Campbell agreed that there seemed to be some who thought "expected" meant "optional," she felt that Dr. Mullins' video made it clear that a mask is expected. She said that if you make it required, you would have to assign discipline.

Questions were asked about employee discipline. Ms. Descovich asked about what makes an exception. Dr. Theidy said that for employees, it will have to go through the ADA process which needs medical documentation. Mr. Gibbs said that for students, it is a doctor's note.

Dr. Mullins stated that he believed the wishes of the Board was understood and he was confident that staff could put together appropriate formal language.

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Chairman Belford recessed the work session at 1:02 p.m.  
She resumed the work session at 1:13 p.m.  
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Chairman Belford began the metrics discussion and stated that it is important to remember that the Commissioner of Education issued an emergency order which requires schools to offer brick and mortar school options by August 31. We have not been successful in getting someone from the Department of Health to give a recommendation one way or the other on school openings. She detailed persons she had reached out to at the state level to find out who would be responsible for closing down schools and the responses/non-responses she had received. She reached out to the US Surgeon General and had not yet heard back. She also reached out to the CDC and she had not heard back from this entity either. Her request is for the Board to identify some metrics that they think are good indicators for the safety of our schools and she would like to revisit those metrics as they get two weeks out from the start date and if they are not at a point where they feel they have reached a safe level of return, she would like the Board's authorization as Board chair to send a letter to the Governor and the Commissioner with the facts and the

research to request a waiver from returning to brick and mortar schools. She doesn't know if a waiver will be successful, but feels she owes it to the community.

Mr. Susin asked for Ms. Belford to frame her recommendations. Chairman Belford mentioned a metric that come out of the Harvard Global Health Institute and suggested that the Board members look at the phenomenal map they put out (global epidemics.org). She said that we could look at our numbers per 100,000. We should be looking at our death rates and hospitalizations. Mr. Susin said that we are specifically targeting our students. He would like for us to look at it regionally. He felt there were other anomalies to look at. How many of our schools are we shutting down and thinks that should be part of it.

Ms. Campbell has some issues with the metrics as families are struggling to make decisions and now we are saying that we might add one more thing. Overall as we talk about metrics, we need to remember that no matter what our rates are; we have families that continue to work and we know students need to be in school. We would be affecting a lot of families and students negatively.

Ms. Descovich doesn't want to make decisions based on feelings and she believes that the health department did set some metrics and set a framework.

Ms. McDougall agreed the health department's presentation was great; but they cannot make decisions. She clarified Ms. Belford's recommendation. Ms. McDougall stated that she had no idea of what metric to use.

Mr. Susin said he felt that the testing was inaccurate and he hated to base closing schools on inaccurate information. He said it appears to be a moving target. There was discussion about testing and delays.

Ms. Belford still felt strongly they needed a downward trend over 14 days and more rapid testing results.

Following some more discussion, it was agreed that the Board would reassemble on August 11, 2020 for a work session to discuss again with the Health Department the trends Brevard was seeing. There was no consensus on identifying specific metrics at this time.

## **Closing Remarks**

### 6. Closing Remarks/Direction

Dr. Mullins will work with staff to develop the appropriate language for the exceptions for the mask requirement.

## **Adjournment**

### 7. Adjournment

Chairman Belford adjourned the meeting at: 2:58 p.m.

Further details of this meeting can be found in the published video found at [www.brevardschools.org](http://www.brevardschools.org).

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_