

**GRIFFITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
August 5, 2020**

The Board of School Trustees of the Griffith Public Schools met in a special meeting at the Griffith Administration Center, 602 N. Raymond St. on the fifth of August, at the hour of 7:00 p.m. pursuant to the rules of the Board.

John Dudlicek, Second Vice- President of the Board of School Trustees, called the meeting to order. After the Pledge of Allegiance, on call of the roll, members were shown to be present or absent as follows:

Present: Kathy Ruesken, President (by Zoom)
Jennifer Dildine, Vice-President (by Zoom)
John Dudlicek, Second Vice-President
Richard Leber, Secretary
Donald McCarter, Assistant Secretary

Absent: None

Others Present: Michele Riise, Superintendent
Meghan Damron, Director of Business Services
Joseph C. Svetanoff, Attorney

Due to COVID-19 masks will be required for those attending the meeting. In order to comply with social distancing guidelines audience members will be limited to 32 persons. The meeting will be live streamed beginning at 7:00 P.M. The link will be posted on the Griffith Public Schools district home page.

Prayer: Mr. McCarter started the meeting with prayer.

Delegations and/or Communications: Mr. Jaques signed up to speak regarding concerns about in the Return to Learn plan. Mr. Dudlicek stated that all his questions would be answered once they open up to audience participation.

Superintendent Update: Mrs. Riise stated that she will share information regarding the Return to Learn Plan under other business.

Consent Agenda: Mr. Dudlicek requested a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Mr. McCarter motioned to accept the consent agenda. Mrs. Ruesken seconded the motion. Mr. Dudlicek requested Mr. Leber take roll call vote with all members voting yes motion passed unanimously. The consent agenda contains the following items: personnel report:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Certified</i>	<i>Replacing</i>	<i>Effective Date(s)</i>	<i>Pay Rate</i>	<i>Hourly, Daily, Seasonal, Yearly Contract</i>
Alana Anderson	Secondary English		8/10/20	\$45,118.00	Contract
Zella Garron	Mild Interventions MS/HS	Victoria Pliego	8/10/20	\$51,689.00	Contract
Riley Hendron	Maternity Position		8/10/20	\$38,500.00	Contract
Ashley Millette	Secondary English		8/10/20	\$40,467.00	Contract
Joseph Ramos	Secondary Social Studies		8/10/20	\$38,500.00	Contract
Josie Werhowatz-Nieman	MS/HS Counselor		7/30/20	\$63,592.00	Contract
	<i>Non-Certified</i>				
Kelly Bacon	Food Service Worker		8/12/20	\$10.51	Hourly
Tiffany Ulman	Food Service Manager WES	Fran Evans	7/21/20	\$15.55	Hourly
	<i>Extra-Curricular/Athletics</i>				
Robert Castillo	Grade 7 Football		8/25/20 to 10/20/20	\$2,545.20	Contract
Jesse Forrester	Varsity Boys Tennis	Donn Gobbie	8/3/20 to 9/29/20	\$3,817.80	Contract
Kristina Taylor	Grade 7 Volleyball	Paul Esquivel	9/14/20 to 10/12/20	\$2,545.20	Contract
Matthew Thomas	Co-ed Cross Country	20/80 split Scheidel	8/3/20 to 10/9/20	\$1,081.71	Contract
Linda Wilson	Freshman Volleyball	Keri Nelson	8/3/20 to 10/12/20	\$3,817.80	Contract
	<i>Separations</i>				
Kathryn Allen-Morgan	Secondary Science	Resignation	7/27/20	\$56,421.25	Contract
Cathy Augustyn	Elementary Teacher	Resignation	8/4/20	\$47,270.05	Contract
Nancy Bakker	Paraprofessional	Resignation	7/13/20	\$12.50	Hourly
Heather Breclaw	Elementary Teacher	Retirement	7/27/20	\$52,065.21	Contract
Glenn Brown	Expulsion Examiner	Resignation	7/17/20	\$2,500.00	Stipend
Steven Bonner	Family and Consumer Science	Resignation	7/15/20	\$46,143.69	Contract

Theresa Dillon	Food Service Worker	Resignation	8/3/20	\$11.12	Hourly
Fran Evans	Food Service Manager Wes	Retirement	7/20/20	\$15.97	Hourly
Veronica Garcia	Secondary Spanish	Resignation	7/27/20	\$55,613.20	Contract
Veronica Garcia	International Club Sponsor	Resignation	7/27/20	\$795.38	Contract
Veronica Garcia	Department Head	Resignation	7/27/20	\$1,500.00	Contract
Don Gobbie	Boys Tennis Coach	Resignation	7/31/20	\$3,817.80	Contract
Jennifer Jenkins	Social Emotional Para	Resignation	8/4/20	\$13.00	Hourly
Kelly Jones	Paraprofessional	Resignation	7/22/20	\$13.50	Contract
Pam Kras	Food Service Cook	Resignation	7/22/20	\$12.46	Hourly
Adam Musielak	Secondary Social Studies	Resignation	8/4/20	\$40,545.45	Contract
Kay Orzechowicz	Secondary English	Retirement	7/30/20	\$73,319.18	Contract
Kay Orzechowicz	Senior Class Sponsor	Retirement	7/30/20	\$3,340.58	Hourly
Amy Pepkowski	Food Service Worker	Resignation	7/30/20	\$11.12	Hourly
Zoie Pepkowski	Food Service Worker	Resignation	7/30/20	\$9.80	Hourly
Castulo Perez	International Club Sponsor	Resignation	7/8/20	\$5,090.40	Contract
Castulo Perez	Boys Varsity Soccer Coach	Resignation	7/8/20	\$795.38	Contract
Kristen Piro	ECD Paraprofessional	Resignation	7/28/20	\$12.50	Hourly
Kathy Planer	Secondary Math	Retirement	7/30/20	\$68,250.99	Hourly
Debra Samson	10-month Custodian WES	Resignation	7/31/20	\$13.75	Hourly
Mary Sanger	Elementary Counselor	Retirement	7/22/20	\$74,277.25	Contract
Melissa Strezo	Food Service Worker	Resignation	7/28/20	\$11.02	Hourly
**Pending Screenings					

Other Business: Mrs. Riise presented to the board the following Return to Learn Plan for the first four weeks of school, and for the first day for the students August 19, 2020. Each board member took the time to explain how important it is to have the students back in class verse eLearning. Mr. Dudlicek requested a motion to approve the Return to Learn Plan as presented. Mrs. Dildine motioned to accept Mr. Dudlicek seconded the motion. Mr. Dudlicek requested Mr. Leber take roll call vote with Mr. Dudlicek, Mrs. Dildine, Mrs. Ruesken, voting yes, and Mr. McCarter voting no while Mr. Leber abstained. Motion passed.

Tonight, I have the task of recommending to you, the board, a recommendation that has not been an easy one to come to as it will have the results of dividing the community once again and for that I am truly sorry!

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, my recommendation tonight for the Return to Learn plan is the following:

- a. All students in grades PreK – 12 will begin school on Wednesday, August 19th. This allows for the staff to continue the preparation for virtual learning with more PD time. We want to “wow” our families in what we can do virtually! Many of our folks are anxious, and I wanted to allow them time to learn it well!
- b. All students in grades PreK – 12 will begin school virtually unless their programming, such as CTE and Cosmetology, requires them to be in person for seat time in order to gain the required credit. Bussing still will be provided.
- c. All teachers will be in attendance at their respective buildings between the hours of 7:30am – 2:45pm, teaching virtually from his/her classroom.
- d. All students will be expected to “tune in live” virtually for his/her instruction and follow their daily schedule. If you have extenuating circumstances that make this expectation impossible to achieve at your household, such as a sick child in the hospital, please communicate directly with the building principal. Otherwise, attendance will be taken every day based upon this expectation. Assignments will have due dates, and grades will be taken accordingly.
- e. This plan is in effective for 4 weeks whereas we will continue to monitor the positivity rate in our county and district to determine if we continue all students learning virtually or provide the two options as previously approved by the board for either in person/virtual learning at that point.
- f. K-2 parents will be invited within the first three days of school to attend with their child for a short period of time fully masked to learn the student management system and expectations of the teacher. Only one parent will be able to be in attendance to ensure we keep all parties safe and healthy.
- g. On August 13th between the hours of 8am – 4pm, Beiriger and MS/HS will be handing out iPads to the new students in Grades 3 – 12. It is our intention that he/she can join in the learning beginning on August 19th as well.
- h. Leah is working diligently with the special programs to ensure their learning is optimal and meets the needs of the child. If concerns, please reach out directly to her
- i. This will create a change in our current calendar in which 5 days will need to be added. I will be working with the Teacher’s Union to ensure that we make up those days and will hopefully communicate it at next week’s board meeting or the one in September.
- j. We will be working with Jaci, Director at Griffith’s YMCA to ensure they are ready to receive students who may need childcare. Prior to tonight, I had the opportunity to talk not only with Jaci, but also with Jay Buckmaster. They are committed to assisting our families during these trying times, and I do want to publicly thank them for doing just that! We want to ensure that working with this community partner, there is student support, supervision, and structure for the children to be able to complete his/her work.
- k. Teachers will meet “creatively” with their class prior to school beginning. Please stay tuned!
- l. Prior to August 28th, parents will be provided a survey from their child’s teachers, requesting their questions and input about how instruction is occurring at that time. In addition, parents will be asked to state their concerns so that the teacher can address these concerns and make changes if necessary. Our goal is to provide “top notch” instruction even if it is virtually. I have shared with the teachers, administrators, and the board that I want this learning to be very different than what occurred in the spring. I have shared parent survey results and comments with all, and I know that we, as Panthers, can do better!

- m. We are committed to ensuring our parents receive PD as well. Please watch out for information coming from our IT department. We want parents to feel comfortable and have the ability to see student grades, attendance, etc. Without that capability, we won't have a partnership which we are desperately seeking as we begin this school year.
- n. Please understand that this plan, in my eyes, is temporary. We will get back to in person learning but at what point is to be determined. I ask that the community rally and help challenge others to do the following to get our students in school. We need everyone to wear their masks, wash their hands, and remain social distanced. As the doctors express not only television but at the state and local levels, these three actions will help minimize the spread of COVID-19. Griffith community, can you help me please?
- o. The large majority of schools in Lake C are currently at a Stage 1 in athletics with little to no contact, as is Griffith Public Schools. We will remain at Stage 1 until further notice.

Tonight, I shared with the board the reasons for this change in recommendation and I would like to take a moment to share them all with you:

1. Currently, our county's risk level is rated to be at the orange level. Lowest risk is green, and the highest risk is red. Orange is the next highest risk level and closest to red indicating we are approaching high-risk level quickly.
2. Lake Co. Health Department recommends that the positivity rate be between 0 – 5% in order for students to attend in person. In the doctor's recommendation to schools, at no time during July 10 – 24 (dates displayed within her recommendation letter) did the positivity rate drop below 5%. Additionally, at no time since March 13th, when collection of the positivity rate data began, has the positivity rate in Lake County been below 5%. Since the positivity rate has never been below 5%, it suggests that we would not have students return to in person learning in the foreseeable time if the doctor's recommendation was to be followed.
3. Today, when I checked the data it showed the following:
 - a. Positivity rate for dates 7/23/20 to 7/29/20 is at a 7.4%
 - b. Positive rate for today is at 11.6%.
 - c. Since July, our positivity rate has increased.
 - d. June had our lowest positivity rates since March 2020.
 - e. As of today, the following statistics exist:
 - i. Ages 0 -19 positivity rate is 9.8%
 - ii. Ages 20-29 positivity rate is 18.0%
 - iii. Ages 30-39 positivity rate is 13.9%
 - iv. Ages 40-49 positivity rate is 16.7%
 - v. Ages 50-59 positivity rate is 15.9%
 - vi. Ages 60-69 positivity rate is 12.7%
 - vii. Ages 70 -79 positivity rate is 6.2%
 - viii. Ages 80+ positivity rate is 6.7%
 - ix. We currently have 923 COVID-19 patients with 202 probable deaths.
4. Some of the PPE items have not been received, and I want to ensure that we have everything to keep not only our students, but also our staff, safe and healthy.
5. We continue to receive calls from staff members, who have been in contact with positive cases, and will need to quarantine. If we would begin school, we have the necessary staff to do so on paper; however, we continue to be challenged by this ongoing dilemma of who do we place in that classroom remains to be determined due to shortage of substitutes.
6. My administrative team and building level teams who are currently working hard in gathering exact enrollment for me at each grade level continue to be a challenge. We ask that all parents who have children returning to Griffith Public Schools, please enroll your child immediately. If your family is not returning to Griffith Public Schools, please make an appointment to complete withdrawal paperwork and drop off the iPads at the respective buildings. This provides yet another challenge for us, as we do not have all the devices back from the students/families who have moved. We need your help and we ask that you help spread the word for us! Either enroll your child as soon as possible or contact us for the return of materials and iPads.
7. To follow all the recommendations presented to Lake Co. Superintendents by the Lake Co. Board of Health, I cannot take the risk of one group of students aged 3 – 10 come to school in person when other students who are older cannot do so. How is that fair to our youngest student population? That is the largest population of Griffith parents who want their students to not be in school for in person learning.
8. In addition, the Lake Co. Superintendents were told that 3-6ft of social distancing was preferred. The closer to 6ft is ideal; however, the state and local health departments realized that we could not do that in all buildings and in classrooms at any school within Indiana and wanted to make sure we were able to distance at least 3ft. When the recommendation was provided to us last Friday night after 5pm, 6ft of social distancing was stated throughout the document, leaving many of us to scramble and make changes at the last minute.
9. With virtual instruction, students will have more structured days, as well as expectations and due dates for assignments and assessments. Students are able to collaborate, and teachers are able to provide instruction on new material and remediate as needed.
10. Lake Co. Health Department shared with the Superintendents that they are currently short staffed and are struggling to contact trace. Contact tracing will be left up to individual school districts with some help from the Lake Co. Health Department.
11. Currently, no one in our county is testing children under the age of 12. How do we know if a child under the age of 12 is positive or not? Our elementary children are at a high risk of spreading COVID-19 as well, and we currently do not have the means to test our youngest students. All of our families would need to commit to self-screening each day or we would have to screen each staff and student daily adding to the student day in length. We are bound by instructional minutes that cannot be altered for daily screening purposes.
12. Lastly, I have been receiving data from individuals with CDC information and data that may not align with IN data. School leaders have been instructed to work with the county health department as they have been working closely with the state health department and our county data. We are to utilize their data in our decision-making, as well as the health department is to guide us in our decision-making.

Tonight board, we have a choice to make. We know that this choice may be welcomed by some individuals within our community but may upset the other portion of our community; however, it is our responsibility to make the best choice for our students and staff at this time. This decision, I know, has weighed heavily on you as well, and I implore everyone to impart the respect and trust in that you will make the right decision for our district.

Parents, please understand that I do sympathize with all of you as I know that this will inconvenience quite a few of you, as well as present some challenges to your family. I urge you to see that the board and I have listened to you tonight and have read all of your correspondences by email. Whatever the decision is, I will ensure that the approved plan is executed to the best of my ability because we are #PantherNation and we are #PantherStrong!

Thank you, board and community, for listening to me tonight!

Audience Participation: Mr. Jacques signed up to speak. He read a statement in regards to projected learning loss due to Covid 19 that was put out by the schools. Mr. Jacques expressed that a majority of parents on the parent survey had originally indicated "in person" learning for their child. He did discuss concern with sports continuing if in person learning cannot. Many audience participants expressed that they did not want the board to stop sports. Football was brought up by an audience member. Many of the public voiced that they believe that the students should have in person class at the start of the school year, and not eLearning for the first four weeks. Mrs. Alvarez expressed concern with not enough information in regards to how student's with an IEP will be supported during the first four weeks of school if virtual option is how we begin the school year. She stated that she has posed the question, "how will virtual learning look for a student with an IEP", but has not received an answer to that question. Mr. Dudlicek explained to the public that the board hears them, and that he agrees that the students should be in school learning. Mr. Dudlicek stated that teachers need more time, and that he is only giving them the four weeks for eLearning, and that they need to come up with a plan, and after four weeks he would do whatever it takes to get the students back in school. Mrs. Ruesken, Mr. Leber, and Mr. McCarter expressed agreement that students need to be in person learning if number of Covid cases does not have drastic movement from where we are today. Mrs. Ruesken, Mrs. Dildine, and Mr. Dudlicek agreed to the Superintendent's proposal of beginning the first four weeks on Virtual Learning while Mr. McCarter voted against the proposal and Mr. Leber abstained from the vote.

Good of the Corporation: Mr. McCarter stated that since the students will be online eLearning for the first four weeks of school that there should not be any extracurricular activities as well. Mr. Dudlicek stated that this is something that the board will talk about and bring to the August 13th Board meeting.

Upcoming Board Meeting: The next Regular School Board meeting will be on August 13, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the LGI room at the High School. The LIVE meeting can be accessed by the public through YouTube. Patrons can locate that link on Griffith Public Schools' website.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. McCarter motioned to adjourn the meeting Mr. Leber seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Kathy Ruesken, President

Jennifer Dildine, First Vice President

John Dudlicek, Second Vice President

Richard Leber, Secretary

Donald McCarter, Assistant Secretary