

**Crawfordsville Community School Corporation Board of Education – Special Meeting**  
**Thursday September 17, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.**  
**Crawfordsville Middle School - 705 Wallace Avenue**

**Minutes**

**1. Roll Call**

All Board members and Administrators were present. Also present were Amy Bales, Nathan O’Neal, Kristi Tesmer, Jason Seward, Sherri Linn, Diana Wilbert, Laura Nichols, Emily Race, Drew Neal, Christin Jeffers, Walter Largent, Carl Kincaid, Keith Mason, Chad Westphal, Charissa Ajayi, Heidi Shultz, David Pierce, Jennie Swick, Greg Hunt, Craig Callahan, Brent Bokart, Naomi Horton, Crystal Ellinger, Taneille Lowe, Dan Guard, Stacie Guard, Molly Whitecotton, and Laurie Vellner.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**4. New Business**

**a. Surplus Items**

Dr. Ryker informed the board that these are furniture items from the High School. We were holding on to a lot of old furniture during the remodel. With items taking up alot of space, with approval, we are now ready to surplus the items by putting them out to auction or dispose of them.

Ellen Ball made a motion to approve Surplus Items as presented. Kathleen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**b. Consider Full Return to In-Person Instruction at the Secondary Level**

President Steve McLaughlin opened the floor to Patron Comments before board discussion.

**Patron Comments**

Patron Drew Neal, Crawfordsville High School business teacher, stated that there is not enough room in the classrooms. “As a teacher, I am not worried about the grades. It is about the students. We need to focus on the grades and kids’ health before all kids come back to school. The Board needs to visit the classrooms at Crawfordsville Middle School and Crawfordsville High School to see what it is like in the classroom.” He stated, “Grades don’t matter; kids matter. We need to determine how to fix the grades before bringing 750 kids back in the school. From a mental health standpoint, the Board also needs to look at ways to provide behavior and mental health services for students to get them the help they need.”

Patron Keith Mason asked what the board is trying to achieve? “What is the focus? Our kids must have a choice, Full In-House – Hybrid – At Home. Kids are now used to the Hybrid Model which is a great compromise. If you change it, it will be disruptive. In the fall there will be the start of the flu season - up the game on mental health assistance - will have physical along with the mental health problems. Is the board addressing these issues if students come back full time? The Board should not decide only. It should be made with the whole community in mind.”

Patron Jenny Swick, Choir Teacher at Crawfordsville Middle School and Crawfordsville High School, stated that her class is not based online. “If we go back full time and kids are pulled out with symptoms, what will be expected of teachers? Are teachers expected to

teach kids online that are quarantined? Teachers are now in the habit of providing lessons. Will I then need to add more to what I am currently doing now?"

Patron Carl Kincaid has a student in Crawfordsville Middle School and his wife is a teacher. The Board will be asking the teachers and students to be three feet apart instead of six feet apart if they go back to full time in-house. He does not understand why it is on the table to be discussed to change at this point.

Patron Chad Westpal has a high school student. He is in support of continuing with the Hybrid Model. If there are full time instructions, there will be a lot of families who choose to keep students home.

Patron Naomi Horton stated that there needs to be more community conversation. "There are Hispanic populations who live in intergenerational homes who will be putting grandparents at risk. There needs to be more conversation with those families on what they need to be successful. We need to address the issue of some kids not doing well. We need to open up a large room in the school for Hybrid students and parents to come to receive help."

Patron David Pierce, Social Studies Teacher at CHS, wanted to make sure that both sides were heard. "Keep in the back of your mind, teachers are evaluated on their interaction with students. What is the motivation, accountability? Parents are not there to keep them moving along. Our ability to help the students that are not there is impossible. The Hybrid Model is not working where we are asking them to teach themselves. We are missing the interaction. It is the best we can do with what we are going through. Crawfordsville has amazing administrators, amazing teachers, and an amazing community. We do a really good job of treating others with respect. Students have stated that they feel like depressed robots. We want them to be excited to come to a place to learn and interact."

Patron Heidi Shultz, Math Teacher at Crawfordsville High School, stated, "I have taught for a total of twenty-eight years and have never been afraid to go to school. There are more students failing math this year than at any time in my career. The Hybrid Model has worked to control the virus, but it has not worked to educate the children. I strongly urge you to get them back in the classroom as soon as you can."

Patron Charissa Ajayi, Art Teacher at Crawfordsville High School, stated that she is keeping her children home. "Students at home are not doing well. We are changing our home setup so that there is a parent with them. We need to find a better way to reach the students at home. We will not send our children back to school. If all back in the classroom, there will not be adequate spacing."

Patron Crystal Ellinger added "I would like to see students back in school. It is scary. Kids need to be back in school. They need interactions with other students. They need human contact."

Steve McLaughlin advised the room that the board takes their role very seriously. "We are interested in the health and safety of every one of our students and their families. We have heard countless patron comments that are in favor of returning to school and countless patron comments against. All make good arguments but we have to listen to what the data suggest. We decided to go with the schedule that the county was recommending that anything above a 5% positivity rate needed to be in the Hybrid Model and we acted on that."

Dr. Bowling advised anything short of full virtual education is going to have an element of risk for all students. The Board is discussing where to draw the line between safety and

education in the county while working with North, South, along with the Health Department. Dr. Bowling stated that the following factors are the major sources of information he used in making a recommendation to the board.

### **Health Risk**

The Hybrid Model was created due to a major concern of massive outbreaks at schools, which have not happened. Hendricks County School's data shows with a full return at the beginning of the school year, with four times the number of students, no outbreaks have occurred to date.

### **Metrics**

The administration has been looking at metrics with North and South School Corporations and the Montgomery County Health Department. The State of Indiana has devised a color-coded system based on the number of new cases per 100,000 residents over a seven day period and the positivity rate. The State calculates a score based on those metrics. Those scores correspond to four colors: Blue, Yellow, Orange, and Red. The State recommends that schools operate in person at the secondary level in Blue and Yellow and move to a Hybrid Model at the secondary level if the county hits Orange or Red. Montgomery County is currently Blue and has been for a long time – never being higher than Yellow. The State recommends we bring students in for a full return on the secondary level based on these metrics.

### **Total Number of Cases**

Looking at the data at the county level of community spread, the total number of cases excluding clusters (involving Wabash College and two nursing homes) is 365 with only 17 that are connected to our schools since we began on August 6<sup>th</sup> with none being connected to each other. The Health Department is reporting that the 17 cases were not caught at school. The most likely infection source was in the home from a family member.

### **Educational Need**

- Crawfordsville Middle School - 354 students had at least one F out of a student body of 596 students.
- Crawfordsville High School - 297 students had at least one F at midterm out of a total of 686 students.
- Those numbers are at least four times higher than the same time last year.
- Teachers have indicated that dealing with in-person students, hybrid students, quarantined students, and full distance learners is too much to ask. Teacher workload has doubled at a minimum. The Teachers Association indicated that many members are seeking other employment in schools that did not implement a hybrid model due to the workload being too much.
- Mental health concerns: Donna Wilson, Guidance Counselor at the Middle School has indicated that anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation among students has increased.

Dr. Bowling summarized, “massive outbreaks in the State of Indiana have not been in the schools. We didn’t expect the students to struggle as much academically as they have with the Hybrid Model.”

Dr. Bowling made a recommendation that we enact what has been discussed with the county schools and approved by the Montgomery County Health Department - that students return to full in-person instruction on Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>. He asked the board to keep three additional items in mind in coming to a decision:

- Mask wearing will be required all day – just as in the elementary schools.
- Full distance will be an option available for students – parents can choose to do so if the board decides to move to a full return.
- We will work on a one-on-one basis to accommodate teachers who have a concern with a full return.

Kathleen Brown stated, “The Board has been hearing various concerns extensively for several months. A subcommittee was formed consisting of two board members, the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, principals, assistant principals, and athletic directors. This group has been working on issues before the school year began with constant conversation.”

Susan Albrecht, also part of the subcommittee stated, “The primary thing that concerns me about the hybrid model is the teachers. No educator signed up for conditions like this. Teachers have been placed under extraordinary stress and pressure. If permissible, why would we not consider full capacity if we are Blue? Students are not thriving. We will not reach 68% of students. There are students that have parents that support them. There are students that are not safe at home. CMS going to a block schedule means that the teachers are only seeing students every four to six days in the Hybrid Model.”

Ellen Ball stated, “We are not talking about emotions alone. We’re talking about metrics, guidance from the Health Department, other schools operating with full in-school capacity while not having outbreaks, educating the majority of our kids, and putting them back in school. We need to begin educating our kids by having them back in school.”

Kent Minnette stated, “The Health Department has a completely different mission than we do in educating our children. Our mission is to educate the children. I fully trust Dr. Douglas and the Health Department with the plan they have put in place with PPE, mandatory masks, etc., that we can do this safely. It is our job to make up what the kids have lost. The majority of our children do not have the home life to thrive with the hybrid model. Our children need to be in the classrooms with our great teachers and educators.”

Kent Minnette made a motion to approve Full Return to In-Person Instruction at the Secondary Level. Susan Albrecht seconded the motion with Ellen Ball and Kathleen Brown both reluctantly voting yes. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **4. Adjournment**

Kathleen Brown made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ellen Ball seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

CRAWFORDSVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

PRESIDENT

Steven McLaughlin

VICE-PRESIDENT

Susan E. Albrecht

SECRETARY

Kathleen Brown

MEMBER

Ellen Ball

MEMBER

Kent Minnette