

From: Johnson, Bryan johnsonbr@aaps.k12.mi.us

Subject: Re: Calling The Closure Like Yesterday

Date: July 18, 2020 at 2:36 PM

To: Kelly, Jessica kellyj@aaps.k12.mi.us

Cc: Jeanice Swift swift@aaps.k12.mi.us, Simone Lightfoot slightfoot2004@yahoo.com, Jeanice Swift swift@a2schools.org

BJ

Thanks All,

I agree that we should make an announcement at the next possible opportunity and we need to make sure we have as much information as possible when we make the decision. While we can use a degree of foresight when making these decisions, I believe COVID is changing the game in a number of ways. The terrain is moving under our feet faster than ever and the politicized nature of the challenge at a national level makes it more important for us to not just think the issue through and make decisions, but to bring the community along with us. Back in March and April, I predicted that if a vaccine wouldn't be available for 18 months at best, that the virtual learning would be the most responsible "public health informed decision." If we'd announced that we were going 100% virtual back then, we would have received tons of pushback. If we were to announce 100% virtual today, we would have a lot more support from the broader community. I still want to hear what the team presents but I do feel like we've been appropriately patient and methodical, and when we do make a decision, we can clearly articulate a meaningful, thoughtful process. I think that's almost as important as our final decision.

I look forward to our study session on Wednesday and any smaller briefings on Monday!

Best,
Bryan

Bryan L. Johnson

President, Ann Arbor Public School Board

Email: johnsonbr@aaps.k12.mi.us

Phone: [REDACTED]

On Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 9:08 AM Kelly, Jessica <kellyj@aaps.k12.mi.us> wrote:

Oh, I also think we need to communicate with AADL **ahead** of the announcement. I know their operations are greatly impacted by our opening/closure. Not only might it change whether/how they open their buildings, but it's also a good opportunity to partner with them to get materials in hands of kids (books, their learning tools like microscopes, etc.)



Jessica Kelly, Trustee

she/her/hers

Board of Education

Ann Arbor Public Schools

c: (734) 707-7872



On Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 8:59 AM Kelly, Jessica <kellyj@aaps.k12.mi.us> wrote:

Thank you, Trustee Lightfoot, for demonstrating consistent, out-front leadership on this issue. I appreciate the time we had together yesterday, and your thoughtful message this morning. I agree with you on all the reasons you've stated about opening virtually.

The way that I'm hearing Dr. Swift's description is that we will have our "dial" turned almost all the way up. With the dial at 90+%, all but our most vulnerable groups will be supported in learning at home. That remaining ~10% will be students whose IEPs or significant family situations demand that they be in a building. With such a reduced group size, we'll be able to follow absolute best practice in infection control. I think maybe having an actual dial graphic on our materials would help folks remember that things are change-able.

I am ready to make this announcement public at the first practicable opportunity. I want to respect Dr. Swift's timeline for having materials ready for the announcement. An extra day or two to pre-empt the many questions is a good use of time, in my

opinion. I know that the work of the team to prepare for all positions on the dial is going full-steam ahead. From my perspective, families are aware of the meeting on the 22nd, and are planning to tune in for an announcement. (If Dr. Swift is ready to announce before that, it can be just to make the announcement with the promise of details on the 22nd. But if that will increase the team's workload by generating community questions ahead of the 22nd, then I'm fine to wait until the announced meeting)

Families will have numerous questions, but the ones that I think we need to be ready to address immediately are:

- which students will "qualify" for in-building learning, and how we're answering questions about both **FAPE and LRE** concerns from AAPAC. I jokingly said to a friend yesterday that we'll all be in "most restrictive environments" if people don't wear masks, but we do know that LRE is a sensitive point for AAPAC families.
- For at-home students, I feel it is especially important to build **distress tolerance and mental health care** into our opening and ongoing days. The state of world is affecting students in different ways, but ALL students will be experiencing stress over learning new technologies, internet interruptions, etc. I'm watching first-hand every day at 9am how middle schoolers in the summer learning challenge are adapting to Schoology. Mostly, it's great. When there is the occasional glitch or misunderstanding, he's very worried that he'll be penalized. Overall, it has been a stressful experience for him (which is partly his personality), but I'm both grateful he's getting the hang of it in summer, not the semester, and grateful that we invested in such a good platform early. I've been impressed with Schoology's tools (and with Alaina Feliks who is his teacher and is doing a great job).
- how **extracurricular activities** will be impacted. I assume we'll follow MHSAA guidance for sports? What about band or other specials? We know that extra-curriculars are the thing that keeps kids coming to school. I'm concerned about our retention without those draws. What about book pick-up, back-to-school or meet-the-teacher activities?
- the district's position/support for/liability for "**learning pods**." This is an idea gaining traction in town where a small group of families agree to quarantine together (not physically; just restricting contact to one another) so parents can share the schooling duties and kids have at least some in-person interactions, if not an actual class. Will we discourage those because of the exposure? Will we encourage those and offer virtual tutoring to small groups, etc.? Families are going to do this with or without us, so we should be prepared.

Thank you again for the work around this unprecedented time in history.
Jessica



Jessica Kelly, Trustee

she/her/hers

Board of Education

Ann Arbor Public Schools

c: [REDACTED]



On Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 7:01 AM Jeanice Swift <swift@aaps.k12.mi.us> wrote:

Hello Trustees,

Your leadership and support means much more to me than you know, thank you.

We are working vigilantly to refine language and documents around a closure announcement - I would like to brief the Trustees on our language over tomorrow and Monday - looking forward to our discussion to see how you prefer to target our explanation / narrative to describe this next phase.

The current plan is to delay virtual school opening by a week, until Sept. 8th, so that teachers can have an opportunity during the week prior to Labor Day to deepen training on Schoology and other online learning readiness. Significantly, to delay the opening of in-person schooling until the case trajectory improves over time (case trajectory is currently rising as you know), likely to January, yet with the attendance of staggered groups of our most vulnerable students in small groups beginning during October-November - Dec as case counts may allow.

As Trustee Lightfoot has aptly noted, we would focus groups through the early Fall on building the systems for COVID-impacted schooling, including ensuring PPE, building readiness, etc.

We will be pleased to move forward on these items. I believe you will have the support of the Trustees and need to not

we will be prepared to move forward early next week - I believe we will have the support of the trustees, yet need to get through upcoming briefings to confirm this.

Appreciate your outreach and support to refine, focus and direct our next steps so our energies are focused on creating the very best online experience that we possibly can.

Please continue to advise - I welcome the direction.

Thank You Much,

Jeanice

On Jul 16, 2020, at 2:31 AM, Simone Lightfoot <slightfoot2004@yahoo.com> wrote:

President Johnson and Vice President Kelly:

Let me extend the hardest "well done" I can, via this e-mail. Your demonstrated leadership last evening was just dynamic and the pre-meeting engagement proved helpful moving the Board to a place of joint deliberation vs. individual, one-by-one engagement. I encourage us to keep moving towards more efficient ways to govern the district, "together".

That said, I am writing as a continuation of my four month request that we not reopen schools (in person). And further more, based on your roles in leadership, I am encouraging both of you to immediately bring before the trustees the opportunity to call it! And I mean like yesterday. That continues to mean in my mind, close in person teaching at least til after winter break (Jan. 2021).

Our district has spent the last 11 years leading. We've built a reputation of taking bulls by the horn, not kick the can down the road, following behind. I'd like our Board to do the same thing here and continue to model what leadership looks like in education. Each day that passes means our administration is working on a plan, that be default, is steeped in "hope" and "pressure" instead of a plan steeped in NOTHING BUT SCIENCE AND HEALTH first, NOT calls for ANYTHING else.

By calling the semester, we give our team and teachers the opportunity to answer key questions, monitor research and focus on creating one of the best online education models around. We can focus on the cracks that have and WILL appear by keeping students at home and virtual. Trustees should have the needed conversations, secure the votes and move swiftly, NOT NEXT BOARD MEETING. We can then help our entire team spend the coming days:

- filling in the cracks
- finding ways to help families that WILL be adversely impacted
- working with the county, public health, hospitals, university, teacher's union, parent groups and social services for unique ways to partner for student's/families/staff needs
- lobby the state to change necessary policies, imposed deadlines and expectations while districts are allowed to be more flexible in the way we spend and reallocate resources address testing teacher evaluations etc. Also allow districts to be more

resources, address testing, teacher evaluations, etc. Also, allow students to be more flexible with virtual learning enrollment so that we can enroll students via our platform from all over the state (for one course or an entire work load with adjustments to how per pupil funding is paid out across multiple district).

- allow the Board the time to look at budget, bond, mileage and sinking fund (pre-Covid)thoughts and rethink everything from HVAC upgrades and the new qualifications of a "sub" to needed new hires that may be more prone to a "teacher assistant" than a full fledge group of new teachers (to break up the total student load of teacher, help input power school data for teachers, assist with monitoring the social/emotional health of students (via the online experience).

- give our team time to work with teacher assignments, determine need and how best to deploy in-house expertise

- determine the supports needed to ensure we have a way and personnel available to "home check" on under engaged students/parents

- make necessary staffing adjustments

- work with the unions to extract their version of answers to their own questions while we work to assign \$ value

- have multiple working groups of teachers and parents working with Dr. Swift to address the concerns and questions the district is being bombarded with

- allow families to begin making necessary arrangements even earlier

- monitor the virus

On and on. I will stop there in recognition of the length of this e-mail and in recognition of the appreciation for you two hearing me continue on and on and on about this same matter.

In closing, let's call it! Let's continue to lead in our state by opening later, just as we closed early.

Thank you,
Trustee Simone Lightfoot