SBS Board of Directors meeting
Tuesday January 12, 2021
APPROVED Minutes

Roll Call: Members of the board in attendance: Larry Cafero, Nicole Shagoury, Sally Davids, Matthew Nittoly, Jessica Garnett, Adam Norris, Ivy McFadden, Kim Mendola, Ewa Derlukiewicz, Kim Grimm, Steven Ferguson, Anthony Pavia

Others present: Marlene Debellis, Maria Restrepo, Mary Newbery, John Hansen

Members Absent: Kim Mendola

Public Session:

Call to Order: Larry called to order at 5:16PM

New Business:

1. **Approval of minutes** from December 22, 2020 Motioned by Stephen 2nd by Sally-- Approved Unanimously

Director's Update

<u>Side-by-Side Educator Certification Compliance:</u>

Effective for the 2020-21 academic year Side by Side Charter School has been declared in full compliance with the CT requirements for educator certification.

Every December all CT LEAs receive a compliance report about the "highly qualified" status of their staff. This is to ensure that all teachers and administrators are appropriately certified and qualified to teach according to their assignments.

COVID-19 update:

- SBS has been in full remote for all grades since 11/10/20
- Re-Opening to a hybrid model is targeted for January 19, and is contingent upon school and community COVID data and trends showing improvement

- Information shall be presented by school administration at the January 2021 Board Meeting for so that we can anticipate any scenarios for planning to reopen.

SUMMARY:

- In planning for fall reopening 2020, all CT public schools were required to adopt a reopening plan which would be help to prepare for potential changes in learning programs in response to COVID trends (i.e. learning programs could change, in any order, from full to hybrid to remote based on color coded indicators of COVID spread data)

- Initially a designation of "red" would indicate a high level of spread in the community which would result in schools shifting to remote learning

- Norwalk hit "red" very early on in the fall (October), however, state guidance shifted a bit, allowing for locally based decisions that would be responsive to school specific impacts of COVID and strain on local, school-based resources.

- Initially our school-based data did follow the same trends as the community data. By mid-October however, community spread increased significantly, even though we had very little spread activity impacting school. We decided to stay open and continue mitigation through a hybrid model.

- Suddenly, in late October/early November we experienced a significant spike in school spread data. Over a one month period, from 10/22 through 11/22, we had 18 instructional staff quarantined, 7 confirmed positive tests, and 42 students in quarantine. Additionally, the 7 confirmed cases was not a solid data point, as many of the students quarantined were not tested despite having documented covid-positive contacts. This data, in concurrence with the continued negative trend in community data resulted in the decision to go full-remote for all students effective 11/10/20.

- *Also it is important to consider that school-based decisions are NOT just based on positivity rates but also must consider the strain on our resources (especially human resources)

CURRENT DATA:

- School spread data is unknown—we have been remote and very little has been reported
- Norwalk weekly # of positive cases as of 1/9/21: 456 (in comparison to 272 on 11/7/20)
- Rate per 100K as of 1/2/21: 62.6 (in comparison to 47 on 11/7/20)
- % positivity rate in Norwalk: 9.2

Overwhelmingly it is consensus amongst all school stakeholders that having children learn remotely is a significantly lower quality experience than the teaching and learning that takes place in school. Managing student engagement, work production, and opportunities for social interaction are significantly impaired without having children attend school in-person. In addition, distance learning presents a significant strain on parents to provide adequate supervision required to support their children's learning. In summary, distance learning and having school closed is worse for children, teachers and parents with regards to instructional quality, and social, emotional and academic learning.

However, while no one would dispute this, the health and safety of both students and staff must continue to be prioritized over all else—even if it means potentially continuing with or being required to revert back to a full remote program in the near future.

Discussion points to consider:

- ✓ We cannot commit to opening without the possibility of needing to close again at any given point and time
- ✓ All school staff will soon be eligible for COVID vaccine (anticipated within the next few weeks)
- ✓ Side by Side is a unique public school with a unique infrastructure and limited physical and human resources. We are NOT Norwalk Public Schools. There is no value in comparing our decisions for instructional model in comparison to Norwalk or other LEAs
- ✓ There were specific concerns about bringing children back to school too soon after a break/vacation due to the possibility of family travel/spikes in COVID spread. (This was the reason behind waiting 2 weeks from the end of holiday break—1/19).
    - Please note: we are scheduled to return to hybrid on 1/19. 3 weeks later, we are scheduled for winter break 2/11 – 2/15; we are back in session for 3 weeks and then have spring recess from March 15-19

In summary, it is the recommendation of school administration to proceed with plans for reopening as scheduled on 1/19 with extreme caution and with the understanding that reverting back to full remote always remains a possibility. In the event that community spread remains high, and that school resources and staffing are negatively impacted as they were In November, we will again implement a remote learning program.

Comments:
Maria suggested that air filters, vaccines, and other measures be in place prior to reopening. Feedback from teachers and parents was given. All agreed that the safety of students and staff was of the upmost importance.

Meeting adjourned 6:35 pm Motioned by Jessica, 2nd by Nell.

Agenda for 5:15pm Tuesday Feb 23, 2021

1. Roll Call
2. Public Session
3. Call to Order
4. Action Items:

-Review/Approval of January Minutes

- Review and Approve SBS form 990 Tax Return

-PKF O’Connor Davies SBS Overview

5. Director’s Update
6. SBS Wellness Program Overview
7. Finance Update
8. Adjourn