



Blakely PTO General Meeting Minutes

January 15, 2021, 10:30 AM, Zoom

Attendees: Peter Bang-Knudsen, Reese Ande, Whitney Skarbek, Lindsay Fiorito, Chris McCann, Jessica Henshaw, Krista Tracy, Stina Tillotson, Alison Lum, Dan Personal, Larissa Ramos, Alorie Gilbert, JD Sumsky, Brenda Norris, Julia Rose, Anna Britt, Beck Henderer-Pena, Britt, Chrissy Hardy, Debra Rogers, Erin Cyger, Heidi Huber, Jackie Clark, Macarena Kattman, Michelle Hobbs, Brian Fort, Annika, Melanie Danelli, Ann, Whitney McCollum, Ida Cornelia, Aundrey Dombrowski, Anne Jarmuz, Thyra McKelvie, Trevor Hughes, Jennifer Pancholi, Amanda, Kate

10:32 AM President's Report: (Lindsay Fiorito)

- Meeting called to order at **10:32 AM** with a welcome and introduction from PTO President, Lindsay Fiorito.
- The meeting will be recorded.
- **10:33 AM** On a motion duly made (Heidi Huber) and seconded (Melanie Danelli), the Blakely PTO members unanimously **RESOLVED** that the October meeting minutes are approved.

10:35 AM Principal's Report and Q&A: (Reese Ande and Whitney Skarbek)

- Reese briefly discussed the school board's decision to approve moving back to Hybrid learning, starting on 1/25 (Pre-K/1) and 1/27 (2/3/4).
- Teachers have spent a great deal of time planning for this type of learning, which is vastly different from a normal year. They feel as prepared as possible but will monitor and adjust from an instructional lens.
- From a safety lens, a tremendous amount of time and effort has been put into the safe return of students from working with Dan Fenwich, district maintenance lead.
- From a logistical standpoint, pick up/drop off of students is a concern because bus ridership is down to 2 busses and there will be a large amount of traffic. Whitney went over the plan for drop off and pick up. Videos will be pushed out with a snapshot of what the process will look like.
- Reese recognized that teachers are very nervous about returning to in person school, so everyone needs to do their part to keep everyone safe.
- Opened up to questions (read by Lindsay):

Q: What is the maximum number of students that will be allowed in the online classes? If there are enough people on the waitlist to open another online section why hasn't the district provided this for families?

A: 28 is the mark but it can be different per grade level. There is a plan next week to discuss the max number and if it's possible to add more students to a section. The desire of the district is to keep as much enrollment as possible. There is a balance between that and what the district can afford due to budget shortfalls. The district is going to do everything it can to accommodate each family but can't promise anything at this time.

Q: Our family opted for remote only during the last survey and have secured a spot with an online teacher for the remainder of the year. What options do families have that chose hybrid option in the survey previously, but now want to remain online only? It seems parents are not being given the opportunity to make that switch.

A: We're putting you down on a waitlist. It is our desire to find some way to support you but there are constraints.

Q: How can online only students that now have teachers at schools outside of Blakely remain engaged with the Blakely community?

A: Keep on email list, stay connected with PTO. However, there aren't going to be any community building events.

A: (Lindsay) Please stay on our PTO newsletter list, and when it's safe to get together and do some community building, the PTO will be ready with opportunities.

Q: I would like more information on the thought process behind using in-person time for specialists. I agree specialists are important and not as effective online, however, I think that the short time the students are in the building should be a designated time for their classroom teachers. By moving the specialist online, this would then give a member of the school staff a visual check-in on every student and ensure they are okay while working remotely. If the specialist teacher notices someone is having a particularly hard time, they can take action or inform the counselor/teacher. Removing specialists from the daily schedule will also further reduce the exposure for the staff and students since the specialist staff won't have to move from classroom to classroom.

A: The district has talked about this at length and the short answer is that specialists provide teacher planning that is part of the teachers contract. Core instruction is very important but there are kids that really love the arts and the sciences and it is important, as well. Forced choices during the pandemic.

Q: I am very concerned about the data that was presented at last night's school board meeting showing that teachers are uncomfortable returning to in person learning at this time. How can the PTO better support teachers at this time? and what specifically is Blakely doing to support teachers and make sure that their voices are heard at the district level?

A: (Lindsay) The PTO board checks in with teachers often and they know that they can lean on us if they need anything

A: (Reese) Administration has tried to meet a lot of the teachers' safety concerns. A lot of their concerns and apprehensions are shared by Reese. Since these are unprecedented times, there is a leap of faith involved, plus following the direction of the health department. Blakely staff comes to Reese with concerns and he advocates at the district level for them. Also, they are part of a strong association, so they advocate for themselves, as well. Reese's biggest disappointment is surrounding lack of vaccinations for teachers at an earlier phase. The teachers that are coming back are ready and willing, but it's important to monitor and adjust the situation as needed.

Q: If hybrid students and/or parents are uncomfortable with returning to in-class learning, what options do families have?

A: Not a great answer at this point, other than getting on the waitlist as soon as possible. The district has a vested interest in keeping families with them.

10:58 AM Superintendent Levy Renewal Presentation: (Peter Bang-Knudsen)

Peter gave a presentation on renewing the 2 upcoming school levies:

- **Enrichment and Operations levy –**
 - Capital Fund - bonds and capital levies (big ticket items - new buildings, HVAC)
 - General Funds - enrichment/operations levy helps fund (basic operations fund - salaries, electricity, books, subscriptions, day to day operations)
 - Enrichment – enhance programs, such as STEM, music, art, libraries, targeted instructional need, professional development, extracurricular activities
 - Operations - day to day operations, salaries, books, electricity, new buildings, HVAC
- The renewal of these levies are essential -
 - picks up where the state funding falls short
 - helps achieve goals of the DIP (equity, anti-racism, diversity, inclusion. social/emotional health of students)
 - state doesn't provide a dedicated technology fund
- 18% of total revenue budget comes from the levies – \$10M+
- McCleary Funding (basic education) did not fix all problems. Bridging funding gaps (enhanced staffing and programming) is still necessary. The enrichment levy funds:
 - enhanced programming - STEM, music, electives, art, etc
 - targeted instructional needs- paras, reading/math support, and special education
 - districtwide support - maintenance, custodial, transportation, central office
 - professional development - instructional support, professional skills
 - extracurricular/student activities - clubs, class, coaching

- There will still be funding challenges even if both levies pass. Due to the pandemic, there is a decline in enrollment from the district (down over 200 students than what was budgeted) that will cause a reduction in staff and programming.
- **Technology levy** – no dedicated state funding, so covers it all
 - equity and access for all students with take home devices, e-books, internet infrastructure, Zoom
 - refreshing presentation spaces
 - software and services for school libraries and distance learning
 - assistive technologies for special needs students
- The tech levy is asking for a modest increase from 2.2M (since 2017) to 2.5M for 2022-24
- Will cost the typical person (based off from the median assessed home value) on Bainbridge Island approximately \$32/year
- Election Day in February 9th, 2021

A link to the informational newsletter can be found [here](#).

11:09 AM Reopening Plan Q & A: (Peter Bang-Knudsen)

Peter shared that the recording from last night's school board meeting is available on the district website on word docs.

Q: One school board member mentioned that school will not be close to "normal" for over a year. When will we start discussions about possible learning options for next year? I think parents need to be informed early and often about the realities of the situation. Is full day learning a possibility for next year, or is it likely we will still be in some form of hybrid learning mode?

A: Haven't planned that far ahead but starting to look at that. There will hopefully be wide spread vaccinations but not sure if social distancing and mask wearing are still going to be needed. Hybrid schedule will depend on the 6ft rule due to the limited space for students. Flexibility will still be practiced.

Q: What is the expectation around mid-winter break? Will BISD/Blakely ask families to quarantine if they travel during the break, in line with the Governor's guidelines?

A: If we want our kids in school, we need to collectively commit to what the health experts are asking us to do. Following the guidelines is in the best interest of families and teachers. This is a shared commitment.

Q: Knowing that COVID is fluid, how can we be locked in to a decision (hybrid) made 5 months ago?

A: We're going to have to be flexible and offer grace. Everyone is doing the best they can. With a district of 3500 students, 500 staff members, contracts etc there is no way to throw out a model and recreate a new one. Each time there is a significant change, it takes weeks to months to implement. Based off of neighboring school districts, the hybrid model is working.

Q: Following the implementation of the plan, #1) what data will be used to measure success? #2) How often will the staff conduct a review of what they have observed regarding the students ability to adhere to the protocol and how often correction was needed? #3) Assuming the data may vary between grades, classrooms, and schools across the district, who maintains the authority to change course?

A: What I've been hearing from colleagues across the state that have in person learning is that students have been abiding by mask wearing and other safety protocols. As far as measuring it, teachers will be doing internal assessments and check ins. The school board has approved the hybrid plan and have given me the discretion to make sure we're hitting our targets so we will be doing ongoing assessments. My goal is to continue with in person learning and make adjustments to improve it as needed.

Q: How do you feel that Bainbridge Prepares hasn't administered vaccines to most teachers?

A: Bainbridge Prepares is amazing. They are just following guidelines and were given strict parameters on who to vaccinate. In fact, the district will be collaborating with them for the next phase. We just need more vaccines, in general.

11:29 AM Continue Q&A: (Whitney Skarbek)

Q: Will there be explicit guidelines on when their child should stay home and for how long (w or w/o negative test) when (1) household member is showing symptoms and is pending a test OR is positive and (2) after traveling (i.e. return at day 10 with negative test after day 5 per kistap and CDC guidelines)?

A: Quick version, the point of contact in the district will be in touch with you in the case of a positive result. They will give very specific instructions of how to proceed (quarantine, neg test, etc) based on when symptoms first appeared. In the classroom, if 2 students test positive, the classroom will move to remote learning. If 2 classrooms have 2 students that test positive, the whole school will move to remote learning.

Q: If we can walk or bike to school, do you prefer that?

A: If you can walk or bike to school that would be great to help with traffic.

Q: What is the drop off and pick up window?

A: Begins at 7:25 AM and screenings and admittance will begin at 7:45 AM.

Q: Where do we find info on AM/PM cohorts and bus routes?

A: In the Tuesday newsletter, there will be specific details of where to find AM/PM designation on Skyward. For bus info, reach out to the transportation department at (206) 842-4641.

Q: What will happen if your child doesn't clear the temp check/screener given we will have dropped them off and left already?

A: They will rescreen after a few minutes. If it's normal, they go into the school. If elevated again, they will go into the isolation room while parents are called to pick up.

Q: Are children required to wear masks at school?

A: Absolutely, kids need to wear masks anytime they're on campus. For water breaks, students will go outside. Masks should have 2 layers of fabric and send an extra.

Q: How are you going to handle separation anxiety for the little kiddos while they wait in line for screening (since parents will have to leave after drop off)?

A: We will do our best to calm kids. Give them a heads up of the process - watch the videos. There will be many staff to help with adjustment.

In the next newsletter, there will be answers to questions that may not have been covered today. Otherwise, please reach out directly to Reese or Whitney if you have further questions.

Coming up:

- Conferences (no school) - 1/21-1/22
- Pre-K/K/1 hybrid begins - 1/25
- 2/3/4 hybrid begins - 1/27
- Mid Winter Break (no school) - 2/15/2/19

The undersigned, being the Secretary of the Blakely PTO, hereby certifies that these are the true and correct minutes of the Blakely General PTO meeting.

Krista Tracy, Secretary