

SPS-Safe School Reopening Task Force – Sub Committee Meeting Notes

Date: 6/19/2020

Committee Name: Elementary Ed Model Sub Committee

Attendee Names: Adam Swinyard Heather Bybee Debbie Oakley, Karin Thompson Tricia Gessele, Cindy Leonard, James Russell, Carol Pederson, Stephanie Splater, Betsy Weigle, Tricia Kannberg, Clint Price, Sara Ball-Vadeboncoeur, Bonnie Williams, Sue Pfeifer, Patty Baer, Suzanne Bantilan Corina Fletcher, Samuel Rasmussen, Melissa Raymond, Melissa Percy, Meredith McNally, Brian Trimble

Meeting Notes:

Focus in on some of the key questions to move into formalizing recommendations to make to the steering committee.

- What Model will we use to provide educational services?

District is currently working with principals to look across all schools to evaluate, based on current staffing, which classes could they fit 20-21 kids including desks and determine how many teachers/classrooms would need to be added, to get to that number, and what classroom spaces could be used i.e. gym, cafeteria, library

- Trying to maximize face to face instruction with safety measures
- It would ultimately be reducing class size by increasing sections and using additional classroom spaces.
- Another model example could be a rotating schedule limiting the number of students in a building at one time i.e. K-4 attends M-F – may need additional sections and classroom spaces and Grades 5-6 attend on an A/B Schedule

Today's Goal:

Formulate a recommendation to the steering committee and parameters to be taken to district team and SEA to sit down and bargain contractual implications

Question - When you hear creating more sections and using more spaces and the concept of an A/B Schedule where does your mind go and what input do you have?

- Where are the numbers? Last time this group talked about splitting coaches and interventionists.
 - The Facilities team has taken some metrics and classroom spaces and is conducting an analysis – Example shared Bemiss Elem - with little or no space for furnishing in their standard classroom, you would be measuring from student head to student head, thinking that would meet the parameter, you can get 22 desks in those spaces. We know not all schools are the same but that's how we are modeling it out to see how many could fit. If we could get 21 kids in each additional classroom it would take approx. 80 teachers to fill the positions. We know we can't hire 80 new teachers but it would be existing people in different assignments and is there enough space in our schools? If we find we can only fit 17-18 kids that would require an insurmountable number of additional teachers/space.
- If this is not a viable model we'd have to go to a rotation schedule like ½ kids one day ½ another or a hybrid model to balance out how many classrooms are needed to meet that requirement
- Does each student have to have their own desk?
 - Understanding is no they don't; we are seeking clarification (mat or alternative furniture) Risk management team is looking at that too, is there liability if kids aren't in an ergonomic chair or position day in and out? Still confirming....
- What specialists are we planning for next year?
 - That would be part of conversations for next year – what model makes sense and for and when is prep. Only health and fitness is required by law so we have to ensure kids get those minutes some other way.

- Last time talked about specialists would serve as classroom teachers – if that is the model, then there is no prep during the day, what happens when a teacher is sick and no sub? Can't divide them up into another room because there would be no space, and no one would have preps to cover that time – Thinks it adds a whole other layer of chaos that gets added that would need to be figured out – should keep that in the back of our minds. Many instances last year did not get a sub when I called for one. Older subs in the district might not accept assignments if they are in that higher risk age category so potentially not as many available subs.
- Economy discussion around having students in school to support economic factors that become issues when kids aren't at school. Are we trading more time in a classroom and changing the quality of experience kids might have when taking a music endorsed teacher and asking them to become a reading writing and math teacher? Wonders if more conversation is needed around it - is more time in a classroom more effective or more time with an expert teacher more effective?

Question for the group - Do you think it's better to go with an A/B schedule and not over complicate this and kids would still have specialists and Fridays maybe we would not have school or we could have school and it would alternate between A day or B day, or do we go down the road to get class sizes down and get kids there every day? A/B schedule impact is huge but so is creating the more classroom spaces and more teachers because it will require changing specialist schedule.

- Both – logistically challenging, but what is going to give us the best intentions of our instructional minutes for kids? Is the mission to provide a high quality ed experience and which of these models will provide the best, it might be ideal that it's daily but are we sacrificing quality to have face to face time?
- Feels compelled to try to work through the possibility of having them face to face every day or 4 days a week and one day off for prep – departmentalizing with a team to narrow the focus. Doesn't have to be just one grade Each bldg. would be unique in figuring that out with extra people, not one size fits all, concept is shared and each principal with bank of teachers figures out what might work well.
- Take away from the last meeting was primary goal was to get kids back as much as possible in person and with the littles especially. Nothing ideal but if anyone can do it it's teachers in Spokane and give the community what they need – would argue it's not uniform school to school and argue for a consistent model with guiding principles for how it's applied. Need to have equity in it – kids in Moran would get something different than kids at Bemiss if we didn't have a consistent model across the system.

Question for Tricia/Clint – In modeling out what it could look like, is the general sense among principals it's logistically possible?

- Generally – inspired about having kids in school every day – are we sacrificing teaching for management of students? – We could only fit 16 students and those some of those close to the board and 8 couldn't see at the very front and that was taking out everything, tables and books in the room. Time restraint and we need to come up with a plan so parents can make arrangements. There was willingness but acknowledgement that there is a tipping point. Where does furniture get housed, and every student has a desk with a chair if that is the need. They asked for 35 desks last year and 25 of the 35 were unsafe for students to use.
- Most folks liked the idea of trying – and measured what it would look like. When you first talk about it, it's hard to picture because not talking about what we think of normally. Blank slate and taking everything out and building from the kid point. Some classrooms have 18-19 kids and others have 21 to make everything fit. Rooms would look different. Buildings across the district are also different. – Balboa looks different than a rainbow school, than a new school. We have rooms that we might use – Elevator rooms are impacted by the elevator cut out and emptying all of those rooms you only fit 14-15 desks in those rooms. Do I have a classroom where that works? Yes. Then there are expanded spaces – art room, can fit more than 21 if you spread it out. There are enough unknown parameters it is hard to wrap your head around it. Library could hold 35 if you took everything out. Art room 25 and still room to teach. What is our mission, every kid every day? And now we aren't reaching nearly 30% and after that a sliding scale. Right now we are not where we want to be as far as engagement. I still think we want every kid every day, it would just look and feel different.
- Staffing seems the most compelling obstacle – hard to imagine risking Covid exposure if community can't get back to work – distance learning seems better – back to being home and distance learning. If we are A/B risking Covid exposure.

- Would be helpful to know what percentage of our families are potentially not planning to send their kids to school and plan to do a virtual online schooling. If it was even 5 – 10% that would make a difference in being able to look at every nook and cranny for space. A better idea on the number that aren't comfortable sending their kids back without a vaccine for example, knowing that number potentially changes the conversation. If it were potentially 16-17 kids vs. 21, I can community build and dig into lessons with kids and would have the space to do that in my classroom.
 - A survey link and message was sent to principals to send out to families. Of the families who have filled out the survey thus far, 95% who are filling out the survey and asking for a distance option are elementary families.
- If one school with more stay at home parents decided to distance learn would we be bussing and moving kids out to different schools?
 - Historically tried to not do that. All past practices are out the window at this point.
- As a parent, I want what is best for my child. There are a lot of teachers who did a really good job online this spring. If I live in an area that has multiple elementary schools surrounding me (e.g. Wilson, Roosevelt, Jefferson) and my children go to Roosevelt, do they have to be tied to their home school site or can they have a satellite teacher from another school? Could that teacher be teaching online and building a community and teach 10 students from Roosevelt, 5 from Jefferson, 5 from Wilson, and have a satellite teacher for the southwest for example? As a parent, I would be happy as part of a community – just wondering if that was an option to not physically be attached to the third graders 1st semester if there is no vaccine and then perhaps 2nd semester go back to school? As a parent, I would rather have them be with a good online teacher and be engaged than have to be associated to a specific school. And you could have staff who are health compromised and don't want to go back to teach in person and hopefully they could be trained and be a really good satellite/online teacher.
 - Great thought. Our sub-committee on remote options is looking at that.

Hopefully by our next meeting we will have more details and modeling to look at more specifics

Craig Numata is collecting all the info (number of staff, spaces, square footage) and compiling it from principals and looking at what is feasible.

A quick poll was taken for a temperature check to see which option the group is leaning towards:

Poll Question – What do you favor?

- Every kid every day
- Rotating schedule
- Combination (Ex. K-3 everyday and 4-6 A/B rotation)

Results of the quick poll showed 50% of the group is in favor of some kind of combination, ¼ were in favor of every kid, every day and ¼ were in favor of a rotating schedule. Adam said we have some work to do and this is a complex challenge to solve. Perhaps we can come to some kind of combination of having our youngest learners K-4 at school every day and 5-6 on a rotation. Or possibly just 6th grade on an alternating schedule.

- Wondering - Was previously in favor of every kid every day initially but is now wondering if that model will stress staff out so much that it will make reaching an MOU difficult and prolong the summer negotiations?
 - Need to keep in mind that whatever model we recommend will need to be negotiated if it changes working conditions. The SEA is committed to doing what is best for kids as much as the district is and those conversations can be complex. Important that we are thinking through all lenses, the parent, the teacher and the student lenses to find a pathway that is going to get us the best outcome possible. Also need to think through the teacher as a parent lens as that is the category many of our teachers fall in.

Digital Curriculum

What digital curriculums will be used?

Need to make a recommendation to the steering committee, no matter what model we are in, we will need a high-quality experience

Use the following tools as the primary digital curriculum option:

- Lexia for ELA
- Dreambox for Math
- MysteryScience for Science
- Use other supplemental curriculums as needed (e.g. MobyMax, Epic etc. – still interest and know some have experience with these)

District wants to talk about this with the group for a couple of reasons; Prepared to make a significant financial investment in Dreambox and a financial investment in Lexia. MobyMax was the main math curriculum and costs quite a bit less than Dreambox

Discussion – Questions, Thoughts, Concerns

- Is Lexia something we can teach to in the classroom as well, so not doing Journeys in classroom and then Lexia at home if they go on an A/B schedule – would it be the overall curriculum and not just digital curriculum?
 - Possibly - that will become some of the work of this committee – Lexia does a great job with foundational literacy skills and starts to reach up into reading comprehension with text but it doesn't pursue narrative, opinion, informative writing. Part of blended learning model and hopefully it will become a daily experience for our students whether face to face or at home. Lexia is a piece of it but not a full thing. Does not see any way to keep what we currently have in our scope and sequence with Journeys in next years scope and sequence – have to narrow that focus with Lexia as a partner to that. Doesn't think we can do 100% Lexia but it does have paper pencil lessons generated for small group and whole group instruction that can be off-line lessons and teachers can use those as well as part of their instruction.

The group made a recommendation to move forward the above plan for digital curriculums (Dreambox, Lexia, MysteryScience)

Key Question - How will we deliver PD on social emotional learning?

Heather Bybee – plan for SEL is to build Summer Institute with the lens of classroom context and SEL (waiting to fine tune when we know what service model will be for next year, A/B rotation, etc.) Launching year with new curriculum – webinar hosted on PLID in the afternoon and break schools into cohorts- virtual -and starting in August on demand webinars available throughout the year – Purposeful People and we will add to them as the year progresses and needs are identified - Race Equity, and tailored for all employees – Modules available to be taken whenever you want to.

We think that will be an hour and a ½ on Sept. 1 afternoon PLID and the other hour and a ½ would be on blended learning strategies and digital tools.

Thoughts? Is that not enough, does it seem about right or other strategies we should be thinking about?

SEL at SI and 1.5 hours on 9/1 Purposeful People and SEL and online self-paced modules teachers can complete.

Is that about right? Do we need more? Other strategies we should be thinking about?

- Thinks we need it before then. Heard from teachers, once we know the model let's go forward but need time to think through that. The sooner we have the model the sooner we get the blended learning – everyone jumped in this spring the best they could without a lot of knowledge behind it so even earlier than Summer Institute would be appreciated. Or have the option to do that during the summer.
- Agree the sooner the better from a teacher perspective. They are primed and ready to jump into this and this won't take much to get people on board and excited. Bigger piece is giving staff more time for this and less with curriculum and focus on this and permission to dive into this for a long period of time at the beginning of the year.
- VTS - I think some more PD around VTS hits the SEL piece too. Matt Beal received an email from someone (thinks a counselor) who said she went through VTS and how VTS perfectly hit all the SEL and a way to preface. Such a nice compliment and lets kids practice the SEL piece.

- Need more time than that to tackle the racial equity piece. It has to be a continuous thread all the way through next year with PD opportunities and staff meeting conversations. VTS is a good fit for that. Getting purposeful people off the ground is one thing but connecting with kids and opening up the racial equity conversation is much deeper and Purposeful People and Character Strong supports that but we will need more time.
 - Hears what is being shared and understands and agrees on a yearlong plan. Trying to survive one day at a time right now. Understands the need to get information out as soon as possible but is grappling with the amount of work that needs to be done. It's June 19 and wants to get them everything they need as soon as we can but clearly 30 minutes ago in our poll, we aren't in agreement where we want to head yet. Getting logins and virtual PD loaded up sooner is possible for those that want to opt into that but staff is taxed mentally and emotionally and needs some time to stop and rest and time for self-care and care for their families. We want a plan to have success for the entire year, it's just the first thing we are tackling for the start of the year.

Thoughts on PLID concept of ½ of the time in the afternoon on blended learning and ½ of the time on SEL or should it be all SEL or do you think we need the foundation of digital tools based on the model or do you think they will have enough time to get used to the digital tools?

- Teachers explored a lot of tools and if we narrow the tools this fall we need time for people to hear that message, maybe not practice a ton to know precisely what it is or what the short menu is and not reading it in an email. It's important for commonality when we slide out by building or whole community. Clear message about regarding here are the supported tools and the PD available and make sure they know how to log in will be important especially if significant changes. People may not have gotten into Dreambox and Lexia, honoring they need time is important.
- Is Afternoon PLID the only guaranteed time with staff or is there a need to bargain for additional time or opt in if they want to pursue more is that the question?
 - The 9/1 afternoon is the time set aside for consistent district wide messages and experiences and there is a day and a half principals will decide with their leadership team where principals could go deeper into topics but this is specifically the ½ a day on the 1st in the afternoon that we are talking about.
- Likes the ½ SEL and ½ blended learning on that day.
- Many have PERT hours they have or haven't already used up this year. This would probably require an MOU but giving them that option of PERT- those PERT hours don't change over until the end of August. Allow them this year to bank some of those hours earlier on might be an incentive for teachers to look at that they are getting something out of it too.
- Clarify difference between platform vs. digital tools – Platform would be Teams and digital tools would be Mobymax and Dreambox. If we know what our platform would be that would be helpful. If we could just figure out that one piece it would be helpful, at least then teachers know what they have to use. If they can use any unused PERT hours to be able to do self-paced learning and be allowed to use them in Sept. (knowing that would have to be bargained) but it made sense when Heather said that teachers need to know they deserve a break and should not be worried and have permission to take the rest of June and part of July at least before starting to look at what these are. They need to hear it from the district that they can unplug and it's ok. Have been attached to their computers since March 17.

Follow Up/Next Steps: We will bring back more info for Tuesday as we model out classroom spaces.
 We will move the digital curriculum tools recommendation forward. Decisions are time sensitive relative to the digital curriculum as we have to sign contracts.
 We will continue our conversation about the educational model. We will be jumping around and not be linear because of the time sensitive decisions so appreciate everyone's patience
 Any thoughts, ideas or wonderings before the next meeting, send them Heather or Adam's way.

Next Meeting Date: June 23