

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

Date: 6/30/2020

Committee Name: Elementary Ed Model Sub Committee

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

Meeting Notes:

We will focus today on the model – so much of what we do will be determined by the model. Review the models we looked at last week and we've added 2 additional models. Talk through the models and then go into small breakout groups to discuss the models and what resonates and why and then come back as a group and take a poll and analyze the results and determine a path forward.

We do not need just one option, nor do we need 100% consensus today.

Questions?

- Do we know what high school is thinking so we can have it match?
 - Secondary met yesterday and conversations are prioritizing face to face as much as possible. The model with a lot of energy behind it has an A/B schedule and some version of that. Questions still needing to be answered around whether they will block or not.
- Food for thought – the hybrid – if in school every day for elementary and secondary is different, we need to look at it politically – maybe elementary needs to bridge some of that too – if elementary is going every day and with the hybrid model maybe we need to say we are using state guidelines, not just saying that it's a union fault.
 - We need to think through all perspectives including the community, and there are a lot of high stakes decisions coming in the next year that impact the education and future of Spokane, so we need to be intentional about serving teachers/staff with the best answers we can for now. For today we hope to narrow it down.

5 Model options to share

The first 3 models (A, B, C) were discussed last time. Heather reviewed the highlights and differences of Options A, B and C. Heather also reviewed newly added options D and E

Background Information:

Classrooms need 255 minutes of prep per week (~51 minutes per day)

We currently have about 120 specialists +/-

- ~40 Art/Science
- ~40 Music
- ~40 Fitness

NOTE: Current interest in Distance only learning based on surveys returned through Monday 6/29 suggest we may need 20 Elementary teachers across K-6 to cover grade level learning. Only a handful of schools have enough students at matching grade levels to convert an existing classroom teacher to a distance learning teacher. In most schools and grades, we don't have enough students to be able to effectively repurpose a teacher.

OPTION A:

Maximum class size of 21 students per classroom K-6

- Estimated needs about 80 additional classrooms (of 120 available)
 - Most schools have capacity to add 1-3 classrooms
 - Assumes music and art/science rooms as classrooms
- With two 30 minute preps (Fitness?), still need 195 (5x39)
- Late start or early release by 40 minutes
 - 9:10-3:00
 - 8:30-2:20

OPTION B:

K-4 maximum class size of 18 and

Grades 5/6 on an A/B model

- Estimated needs about 120 classrooms
 - Most schools would have to consider library as a classroom and possibly the gym
- Assumes all prep outside the school day
- Late start or early release by 51+ minutes
 - 9:21-3:00
 - 8:30-2:09

OPTION C:

Hybrid in terms of class size

K-4 could probably be less than 21, but not all the way down to 18 maximum.

5/6 would also be able to go every day with a maximum at or below 21.

- Estimated needs about 120 classrooms
 - Most schools would have to consider library as a classroom and possibly the gym
- Assumes all prep outside the school day
- Late start or early release by 51+ minutes
 - 9:21-3:00
 - 8:30-2:09

OPTION D:

K-3 at 21 max

4th-6th on A/B

Need about 10 additional classrooms to get K-3 down to 21 max.

Reduces need for Specialists to become classroom teachers

Keeps K-3 on a nearly full schedule (still early release on one day? Or shortened days every day?)

OPTION E:

Fill all classrooms to max, blending grade levels where necessary.

Takes advantages of grade levels where numbers are below 21

Tougher to manage mobility

Need 13-15 additional classrooms to fill all classes to 21

Creates multiple combos at every school, worst case scenario up to 165 from current projected 45.

- Thought A was all kids K-6 to 21 max so what is the difference between it and E? A is prep outside the day and utilizes specialists for instruction.
 - With E you bump up the class sizes to 21 and you wouldn't need as many specialists to teach regular classrooms because you're making combos.
- There will be individual building considerations. Option E utilizes our current specialist schedule. Schedule would be built based on what a classroom could hold. So if it could only hold 19 then it would be built with 19. But otherwise it would be staffed at max of 21. But the overview was built with 21
- Do we know what the current school day is?
 - Hasn't been decided yet, all models are built on what our school day currently is.
- Conversation around 3 ft vs. 6 ft? Any updates on that?
 - I don't know where we are, feel like the news cycle isn't helping us and we seem to be growing in terms of infection rates
- What is considered outside the day in terms of prep?
 - When kids aren't there
- Would this cause major bussing and issues where there is an overload of students?
 - We know there are hot spots already (Arlington/Mullan Road) we would look at the school and what we have for feedback for those interested in all virtual options. Currently estimate is coming in around one classroom per bldg. with some areas a little more (south hill)

Break out groups – What model resonates with you and why? After the breakouts we will come back and do a poll and have a shared conversation (15 minute small group discussion)

Poll – Choose your top 2 and then if willing to share why advocating for a particular model

- Can we select option 6 (F) if we feel like there is an option not shared yet? How about we vote for top 2 now and then we can discuss after the original results.

Options 1 (A) and 5 (E) had the same amount of support 59%. Option 2(B) had the least support

Anyone who voted for option 2 (B) willing to share their rationale?

- Question - Option B uses specialists as classroom teachers. Tricia – last week was unable to join us - on a meeting with the governor's office - but in previous meetings we discussed using intervention teachers rather than going to our specialists. Might shift thinking around Option B if we are able to use interventionists and coaches in a different capacity?
 - They cannot supplant a basic ed teacher. We had talked about if we combine a classroom by opening the wall then you could use an intervention teacher as a co-teacher and do a co-teaching model but an intervention teacher cannot be a case manager or be the teacher of record in Powerschool. They could facilitate small groups and focused instruction in a larger classroom. It's due to the federal funding source requirements and not because of their endorsement requirements as a K-8 teacher.
 - Looking at it from a Rainbow school, they might be able to make it work but looking at a Wilson or Hutton, it probably won't work so perhaps we use the model that works at the hardest to fit school and use that model for all. Title and Lap schools also have inequity in their funding/staffing.
 - Can you redistribute them to where you need them? Rank order allocation – that would be the answer
- Choose option 3 and 5 – 3 because 5th and 6th grade could handle being home alone so if we had to do an optional model that would be one way. 4th grade is too young to be home alone
- Taking specialist out of specialist area is tough to do. K-8 endorsed may not be easy to go back to teaching math if they haven't taught it in 20 years.
- Hard to have specialist teach something they haven't been hired for or their specialty – if music teacher had to teach 1st grade, there would likely be lot of student and parent tears and teacher tears.
- Option E rose to the top as students are back every day and specialists in their traditional assignments. A/B schedule is really complicated when you have families who have K-3 aged kids and intermediate students too. Can't imagine one child going every other day and then another child going every day. Also 4th grade too young to be alone during the day.
- Similar conversation arose at secondary too. How can I be focused if worried about my own kids and if I am on a different schedule than my own elementary children? A lot of mental stress on our staff. Option E resonates the most but curious about the associations perspective and if we are missing anything.

- Looks at the 165 possible combinations, mental health for teachers, new learning to be sure onboard, that's a huge ask especially for changes. What is the experience that kids are going to have in school? Personally don't have the distraction of my own kids in school but for mental health of teachers to say 165 classroom combinations makes letter E scary.
- Reykdahl said he did not believe every student was coming back so wonder why we don't have a plan where we incorporate the kids we bring back - those that were furthest away from educational justice, the IEPs and those who need services and we do distance learning until we can get them back.
- Think it was in our initial plan but the group decided that the goal was to get kids face to face as the impact of this has been great and sure it's been greater in some zip code areas but littles on the south hill are striving for normalcy too.
- Understand - but it's all temporary, probably have to do something uncomfortable for us given it's temporary.
- If we did a temperature check with families, I don't think we'll get accurate info unless we can tell them the model. As soon as we know the model we can survey families to get an accurate picture of what to expect.
- Mead sent a survey with a model or two and said given these 3 scenarios what model would you choose – are you saying the reverse is going to happen?
- Our task was to bring forward a couple of options. One option is not enough and 5 options are too many. Virtual option is already a reality so what are the school-based options?
- Secondary and Elementary options are probably going to be different. If you throw a K-4 and a 5-6 and secondary then you have 3 different models to consider. Throwing another option for K-4 and 5-6 adds to the complexity.
- Temperature checked the science specialists and they were kind of split 3 ways -some said just give me science, put me on a cart and I'll do it. Others are tired of being back and forth and they want to be in a classroom and others were asking to be put in the classroom or on a cart and would just make it work. To be a science specialist you had to be an elementary teacher. I would put a science specialist back before I would put a music teacher in the regular classroom. It's a hard decision but science specialists could be a possible resource knowing they are elementary teachers and knowing they have the K-8 degree vs. a music teacher could be a stretch. Most librarians are rock stars and adaptable.
- It's tough for us to say something about all group of teachers – teachers who are great instructors and managers will figure out a way if we give them the support they need when it comes down to it. Hard to say the same thing for 100 to 200 plus as there are excellent instructors out there.
- Hard because we want to give them everything and we need to make the best of a not ideal situation. No matter what model we choose there will likely be some kind of individualization – not expecting a Regal and Moran Prairie to look exactly the same – as long as we have the guiding idea – every kid every day, doesn't mean it won't be individualized to the location, the staff, the context, the community
- How flexible can we be? Can each bldg. determine what they do with what they have e.g. model E and if all of Regal comes back day to day instruction and could Regal use an intervention teacher as well and let's say all of Hutton comes back but they don't have an intervention teacher, can they go to an A/B model?
 - There has to be a guiding principle, so if all are back face to face then that's what it is. Equity issue – some parents will want to raise funds to pay a teacher. Need to be universal. But how they approach the work and division of labor could look different.
- Echo sentiment – voted options 1 and 5 – look the same to families between those 2 options but we know they look different to staff. Maybe narrow those down and then find a 3rd pitch (K-4 model?) then we're offering 3 very different options to families. No good option so how do you move toward narrowing it down?
- So much work on the back end of this decision – not saying we need to walk out with an option today but need to have families guidance and clarity
- Would options D and E be staff pulled from within or additional hires?
 - Not clear – would need to check with Craig – it would depend because they don't cut evenly
- Options 1 and 5 are the same it just looks different during the day and to us in how we deliver an ed experience.
- Could we look at 2 (B), 3(C) and 4(D) and choose one.
- Are we voting from a parent/community perspective or teacher perspective?
 - That question tells you how many are in that boat in SPS.
- D is all prep within the school day with specialists
- I'm not sure that I would see 1 and 5 the same from a parent perspective.
 - Those are highlighting the need for every kid every day.
 - The arts and health and fitness are important. My husband's reaction was should we be looking at private school if students aren't getting science, music, health and fitness
 - Not saying that - of the alternate models, which one would we narrow it down to?

- On Option 3 everyone is there, it's just the sizes change and all prep is outside the school day. A and C are very similar.
- Should we be looking at and voting on Option 2(B) and Option 4 (D)?
 - Option B is the worst of them all in my opinion – It has all specialists as classroom teachers, 5/6 is on A/B rotation and all prep is outside of the school day

Are we comfortable eliminating an A/B option? – most were comfortable

- Tricia was opposed to removing an A/B option – Tricia is hearing at the state level that we need to have a plan in place for A/B and be willing to pivot to that if we get to a point where we can't have kids in the school building. Not opposed to every kid, every day. Need to flesh it out.
- Could A/B model be reflective of secondary? Different variable but sees what Tricia is saying.
- One model did allow kids to access specialists but teaching would change. We are all grieving, but the reality is we have to lean into a lot of uncomfortable. We all know how to do traditional school. Masks and all so we should focus our time on things that don't make us super comfortable when looking at some of the trends happening it seems like a viable option. President of AWSP was in a meeting and said if you are preparing for the fall you have to prepare for an A/B model and that's where energy should be spent. Concerned that we are going with what is comfortable vs exploring what might have to happen. There's no good answer.
- What opportunity does an A/B model offer that every kid every day w/social distancing not offer? If we say we can meet the space and health requirements what part are we missing?
- Consistently voted against the A/B thing but it frees up resources. Scary to think about full time models. Buildings are so tight – if someone calls in sick or gets exposed and can't come in for 2 week and when buildings and staff are stretched to maximum there's nowhere to put kids – Administrator may already be covering in another class. Every single aspect is stretched to the max. Only benefit to A/B model is that it is relaxed a little bit and can impact the quality and predictability but at a cost.
- If went to A/B model there are other options other than every other day or ½ days. Could be one full week on and one off. Week one for group A and week two for group B. Teaching 5/6 and 30 kids in class and see 15 at a time would have room to absorb a couple of kids if there was another class with no sub or needed a buddy room situation. Would have room in class for furniture. A/B model like that is not ideal and I want to see my kids every day but if managed in that kind of capacity it's possibly more doable for families who need childcare every other week.
- Curious to hear Brian's take on that – as a childcare provider – it's a hard business model.
 - Even if A/B schedule of alternating weeks it's going to come down to the challenge of capacity and labor.

Think that maybe we should revote entirely. Put all options back on and vote for one and then when we come back we will see where we are. Other districts are in the same process and they are looking to see what we are doing. Zip code doesn't change questions so the more common experience we can provide for children the better.

- There's not truly an all A/B option – there's a hybrid.
- Think we would all want to see another option – we would bring a 6th option back and bring it up with the steering committee, what would Dr. Lutz say and where are other districts focusing?
- Want relationships with kids to be vital and important because of the kind of support they need. If we have kids spread out what we know is that when we can't do more individual/small group teaching we lose 80% in that setting. If we have a smaller group we can prepare and then come back and hit some of that. Straight A/B K-6 and kids for extra services couldn't those be scheduled for additional services on the other days so they are getting much more? That could go back to a 6th option.
- Are we ok getting clarification from steering committee on the A/B? Secondary might be making a final decision today – not sure but they are in a different place. Let's get clarity around the 5 here and where the most energy is. Eventually we have to move on and start building a plan. Coordinators are waiting on a plan to so they can map out the resources and do all the things we need for a successful launch.

Poll – Voting on all options again and just one vote.

Result - Option 1 (A) Option 5 (E) rose to the top

Next Steps: Next meeting relook at Option 1 and 5 and revisit A/B options. Next meeting (hope it will be after the 4th of July) and can we put the models in a format that compares like things. Would help to see the pros/cons and impacts.

Are we going to look at a K-6 A/B option? Thinks we will bring one to the next meeting. Is there help needed to look at that? We will build out a comparison form and if you have A/B thoughts you can include them. Energy is looking around 1 and 5 and look at another set of A/B options. Please add thoughts in the Team that was created.

Next Meeting: After 4th of July holiday weekend.

Questions/Wonderings:

Follow Up/Next Steps:

Next Meeting Date: