

WEBER SCHOOL DISTRICT
5320 Adams Avenue Parkway
Ogden, UT

Study Session
October 7, 2020

The Board of Education of Weber School District held a Study Session in the Superintendent's office at 5320 Adams Avenue Parkway, Washington Terrace, Utah. The meeting convened at 5:00 p.m. The following Board Members and Superintendency were present:

Jon Ritchie	Board President
Dean Oborn	Board Vice President
Jan Burrell	Board Member
Douglas Hurst	Board Member
Paul Widdison	Board Member
Janis Christensen	Board Member
Jeff Stephens	Superintendent
Art Hansen	Assistant Superintendent
Lori Rasmussen	Assistant Superintendent
Robert Petersen	Business Administrator

Also attending were Brandon Baca, Weber Education Association President, Barbera Whitman, Uniserve Executive Director and teacher Pilar Caballero. Board Member Bruce Jardine attended via Zoom.

Superintendent Stephens opened the meeting by discussing the following critical district needs:

1. Long term flexible learners and the responsibility teachers have to provide digital instruction. The options for families at the beginning of the year were reviewed; In-person instruction, (currently 91% of our students participating), short- term flexible learners, (students out for a period of days, up to two weeks due to several reasons), and long-term flexible learners, (students opting for at least a quarter to learn digitally). We also have remote learners moved into Weber Online. Teachers are trying to manage all three groups, but the greatest pressure on teachers are their long term students. Long term learners are self-paced and will either keep up or fall behind.
2. Contact tracing. Our nurses are currently handling all contact tracing and communication with Weber-Morgan Health department. He explained Davis School District received funds from Davis Health department to hire contact tracers in the amount of \$700,000. Weber-Morgan Health Department did not receive the same CARES money.

Superintendent Stephens was invited to meet with Commissioner Gage Froerer, County Treasurer John Bond, and Commissioner Jim Harvey. Dr. Stephens expressed in the meeting the critical needs we have in our school district. Weber County received CARES funding and proposed sending a portion of these funds to Weber School District. The commissioners were willing to set aside current projects and direct \$750,000 immediately to Weber School District. Weber County is scheduled to receive up to \$24 million in CARES funding in three installments of \$8 million each. They have received the first two installments which includes the \$750,000 to Weber School District. The third installment has not been released from the Governor's office. When released, the commissioners will redirect a significant amount back to Weber School District.

Following the meeting with county officials, it was discussed within our district how to use these funds. First, we have opened fifteen positions for contact tracers to be used over the next seven months. This will help take pressure off our nurses. Second, hire seven elementary teachers, one per grade in K-6, to work closely with the Curriculum Department. All elementary long term learners will be pulled from their regular classrooms. Next, there was a discussion regarding secondary schools and our Weber Online program. Weber Online has been in place for eight or nine years and now will be expanded for our long term learners. Our current organizational structure would not have the capacity to sustain this new model. Superintendent noted that it is unusual to ask the Board in the middle of the year about a reorganization, but failure to do so would be irresponsible. Not responding to the needs we are having may result in loss of teachers. He proposed to open a position for Weber Online Principal as a K-12 school. Many things are in place for secondary but will need enhancement to add additional elementary long term flexible learners. This will be a one-time model as we work through the Covid pandemic. Currently we have contracted with a third party provider but the WPU is passed onto them. Our plan is to build Weber Online to allow use of our curriculum and teachers.

Superintendent Stephens noted how the role of digital teaching and learning need a greater emphasis in our school district. Our Technology and Curriculum departments are jointly trying to manage the current responsibilities. We will continue to have 1800 teachers working with Canvas and digital instruction. Superintendent Stephens is recommending we open a position for Director of Digital Teaching and Learning. He explained this will not be a new individual but a reorganization of positions within our existing structure to help us move forward.

A Zoom meeting has been scheduled tomorrow for all administrators to walk through these plans. Cami Alexander, Elementary Education Director and Gina Butters, Secondary Education Director will send a letter to all teachers about these changes. Beginning the second quarter, teachers K-12 will not teach long term flexible learners. This will be a tremendous relief on teachers. Special Education students will need a different model that Quinn Karlinsey, Special Education Director will help develop. Students with an IEP (Individual Education Plan) have very specific goals and moving them into the Weber Online model will not allow them to follow their IEP and specific goals within their plan. We currently have about 150 Special Education children we need to give additional support to.

Superintendent Stephens, paid tribute to our extraordinary teachers and the dedication they have shown this quarter. He stated they have been champions and have put in many long hours of their own time which is recognized. We are grateful to county commissioners and their willingness to redirect CARES funding that allow us to have a plan to relieve pressure. Also, a tribute to our nurses and what they have done in the past seven weeks is incredible. He expressed gratitude and admiration to all.

Superintendent Stephens also recommended the Board extend into the end of the second quarter, our modified schedule of a 45minute reduction to the school day. The plan is to assess it quarter by quarter. It has been very helpful for teachers.

Janis Christensen asked for clarification on why Davis School District received CARES funding from their health department when Weber School District did not. It is unknown why Weber-Morgan Health Department did not receive funding. She also asked about the position for principal at Weber Online K-6. Weber Online principal will be for grades K-12 and may open with approximately 3,000 students. Weber Online is currently managed by Hal Raymond. Hal is also principal at Weber Innovation Center. Our current organizational structure would not support this. This is one- time money to hire seven teachers that will be open for all teachers but particularly those with a curriculum and technology background. In the future, we will staff the school in a similar way we staff other schools. The FTEs are assigned to schools based on student enrollment. Staffing ratios will determine FTE at Weber Online and the WPU will flow to Weber Online.

Board Member, Jan Burrell asked what the savings would be discontinuing our K-12 third party contract. Superintendent responded, the third party provider is currently a pass through of the WPU but in the future we would retain it.

Board Member, Bruce Jardine asked where we will house the new principal and staff. The seven new teachers will be housed possibly downstairs in the District Office. We will look into the best option for the principal.

Board Member, Paul Widdison asked about funding for the principal. It was noted it will be a reorganization of our existing organizational structure. The funding will come from WPU and staffing ratios will look a little different then in a brick and mortar school.

Board President, Jon Ritchie noted it has been explained by Superintendent Stephens we will be able to fund and maintain this plan. It is the jump start of the \$750,000 that enables us to do so.

Board Member Doug Hurst asked about the organizational chart. The current chart shows possibly two new positions but one or two current positions may be eliminated. It will be a reorganization.

Meeting adjourned at 5:59 pm