

Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park
August 16, 2022 Regular Meeting

This meeting was held in-person and virtually using Livestream. Board members met in person along with Administration.

President Kim called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Kim, Hurd Johnson, Moore, Ross Dribin, Kearney, Kinhal (left meeting 9:50pm)

Absent: Spurlock

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Ushma Shah, Associate Superintendent of Education Dr. Felicia Starks Turner, Interim Senior Director of Human Resources Dr. Tim Kilrea, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Dr. Eboney Lofton, Senior Director of Equity Dr. Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Curriculum & Instruction Dr. Tawanda Lawrence, Senior Director of Finance Patrick King, Senior Director of Buildings & Grounds Jeanne Keane, Security & School Safety Manager Jim Hackett and Lonya Boose Board Secretary.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Kearney moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board move into executive session for the purpose of Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees, Collective Negotiating and Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1)(2)(11) at 5:33 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

OPEN SESSION

President Kim motioned that the Board move into Open Session at 7:00 p.m. All present members of the Board were in agreement. The Board convened in Open Session at 7:06 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

3. PUBLIC HEARING: Physical Education Waiver

Opening Motion: That the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to open a public hearing on the Districts Physical Education Waiver.

PUBLIC HEARING

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Moore, Kinhal

Nays: None

Absent: Spurlock

Motion passed.

*The District did not receive any public comment around the PE Waiver Request. Being no further discussion on this topic, Board President Kim asked the Board for a motion to close the hearing.

Closing Motion: That the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 moves to close the public hearing on the Physical Education Waiver.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Moore, Kinhal

Nays: None

Absent: Spurlock
Motion passed.

Physical Education Memo to Board of Education and Superintendent

(From Dr. Eboney Lofton & Dr. Tawanda Lawrence)

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Education information regarding the Physical Education Waiver the teaching and learning department is requesting for school years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

The teaching and learning department is requesting a modification of the daily physical education requirement for students at the kindergarten through fifth grade levels as outlined in 105 ILCS5/27-6. We are asking that physical education with a licensed physical education teacher be limited to 60 minutes per week. This request does not impact middle school schedules for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade as students will continue to receive daily physical education classes with a licensed physical education teacher.

While our district team values physical education, we have evidence-based reasons for seeking this waiver:

1. Human capital and space limitations. The district has neither the space or the personnel to meet the state's requirement. As an example, one of our elementary schools has 33 sections from kindergarten to fifth grade. If each classroom participated in a 30 minute gym class, the maximum number of classes that can take place, conservatively, would be 14. In order to provide courses aligned to the Act, the district would need to hire an additional 1.5 teachers at the school and find three total large spaces that are not already in use that can be used for physical education. There could also be a need to reconsider all of our special area offerings (Music, Art, World Language, Library) in order to meet this provision.
2. Continuation of current practice. This waiver was last approved in July 2020 and does not propose a change to schedules that students in kindergarten through fifth grade have experienced in the past.
3. Embedded opportunities for physical activity. The teaching and learning department will partner with elementary schools to ensure students in kindergarten through fifth grade receive adequate physical activity on a daily basis beyond 60 minutes of physical education per week and 30 minutes of daily recess. Students will participate in at least 15 minutes of physical activity education (PEA). PEA is in addition to daily recess, and will allow all students time for movement and opportunities for large and small group activities. Additionally, effort will be made by regular education staff to provide structured classroom activities that require movement and fitness.
4. Continue to provide nutritious meals. District 97 will continue to provide all students with nutritious meals through the National School Lunch Program.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Good evening,

I am writing to ask you to prioritize passing a Secure Firearm Storage Policy. This is an incredibly important policy for our community because raising awareness about safe gun storage has a direct effect on lowering gun violence. It is a simple thing the school district can do to keep our community safe.

Every year, nearly 350 children unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. When it comes to school shootings, up to 80% of all shooters under the age of 18 got the gun from their own home or that of a friend or relative.

This is just as much a health issue as annual physicals and eye checks are. We need to keep our kids safe. We NEED this policy.

Kelly Darin

Good morning,

I am writing to request you prioritize passing a Secure Firearms Storage Policy for the district. The vast majority of school shootings are perpetrated with family-owned weapons, and research shows that the majority of gun owners do not safely store their firearms. As a mother, I cannot imagine the pain of losing my child. I want all of the children in the area to be safe at school.

Educating families on securing their firearms is a simple, no-cost step the district can take to reduce the risk of a child accessing a gun, much less bringing a weapon in to school. Please follow the example set by other districts around the country by passing this policy.

Thank you,
MaryElizabeth Luitjohan

I am writing to ask D97 to develop/adopt a policy to provide education around safe storage of firearms at the district level. 73-80% of school shootings are the result of access to an unlocked firearm in the home. We need to speak with families about this directly and D 97 needs to take the lead on developing a policy to address this important public health issue in order to keep our kids and teachers/ staff safe.

Sincerely,
Jodi Walker

Dear Members of the D97 School Board,

As you know, gun violence is the leading cause of death for children in Illinois. Part of the problem is easy access to guns. For children and teens, access to unsecured firearms contributes to gun deaths caused by unintentional shootings, suicides, and school shootings. Despite the risk to the safety of children, the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms. That is why I am asking you to prioritize a Secure Firearm Storage Policy and provide D97 parents and guardians with evidence-based information about gun safety and offering specific ways to secure guns safely in the homes that children reside and visit.

Thank you,
Emily Dzugan, Oak Park resident

I am writing to request that D97 follow the lead of other Illinois suburbs and pass a Secure Firearm Storage Policy. Research shows that secure storage is an effective way to prevent intentional and unintentional shootings, and as a clinical psychologist I would emphasize that the traumatic toll of gun violence extends beyond physical wounds in its impact on lifelong mental health. Our district has the opportunity to take a critical yet simple public health step - please plan to vote on a draft policy at your next meeting so that we can start protecting Oak Park students NOW.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rachel Gershenson-Gates

Recent events including, but not limited to, the shootings in Uvalde and Highland Park, continue to reinforce the sad fact that easy access to firearms can lead to the deaths of children. Each year, hundreds of children gain access to firearms and unintentionally shoot themselves or others. Suicide by firearm among young people is increasing faster than any other age group. Gun violence is now the leading cause of death in children. As a child myself, I had other kids find and point their parents' weapons at me. I am asking District 97 to pass a Secure Firearm Storage Policy to help prevent shootings by making access more difficult. Please vote on a draft policy at the August meeting so we can better protect our students.

Thank you for your time and effort in this matter,
Justin Gershenson-Gates

Dear D97 Board Members,

I'm a parent of two students at Beye and Julian. I'm looking for concrete actions that we can take as a community to help prevent gun violence. I ask that you pass a secure firearm storage policy in the district. Each school would be required to provide safe firearm storage information to all families in the school community. The parents or guardians would be required to acknowledge that they have received and read the information. More information about the types of information that a school could provide to their community members can be found at <https://besmartforkids.org/>.

Thank you in advance for considering a secure firearm storage policy for D97.

Sincerely,
Morgen Alexander-Young
Parent of Beye and Julian students

Hello,

I'm the parent to an incoming kindergartener at Mann Elementary. I sent a previous comment for the postponed meeting last month. I am again writing to ask you to prioritize passage of a Secure Firearm Storage Policy for D97 schools. This is an evidence-based way to decrease easy access to guns that will keep our teachers, kids, and community safer.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Marklein, Mann parent

Hi,

I am writing as a D97 and Lincoln parent to request that the D97 Board passes the secure firearm storage policy.

I recently learned that Illinois was the state that sold the most number of guns for 10 out of 12 months in 2021. Guns are in and around our community, and I hope the Board will take the steps it can to share safe storage information.

The vast majority of mass shooting perpetrators took guns from their own homes. I ask the D97 Board to please pass a secure storage policy to share information with all D97 families about the importance of secure firearm storage.

Thank you for your consideration,
Allison Lipsman

Dear Members of the D97 School Board,

As you know, gun violence is the leading cause of death for children in Illinois. Part of the problem is easy access to guns. For children and teens, access to unsecured firearms contributes to gun deaths caused by unintentional shootings, suicides, and school shootings. Despite this risk to the safety of children, the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms.

That is why I am asking you to prioritize a Secure Firearm Storage Policy and provide D97 parents and guardians with evidence-based information about gun safety and offering specific ways to secure guns safely in the homes that children reside and visit.

Thank you,
Jenny vondrehle

Gun deaths are the major cause of deaths for children. Many are caused by other children with access to unsecured guns. It is imperative that our schools do everything possible to ensure children are protected from the risk of harm from guns. Please approve a Secure Firearm Storage Policy beginning for the school year 2022 - 2023.

I urgently request that the District 97 School Board take every step possible to promote the safety of our students. One urgent act District 97 can take is to approve a Secure Firearm Storage Policy. The policy will direct the Superintendent to notify parents and guardians about the importance of secure gun storage to be included in annual registration materials at each school site, and require a signature acknowledging awareness of secure gun storage responsibilities.

To increase the safety of the students of District 97 - please approve a Secure Firearm Storage Policy beginning for the school year 2022 - 2023.

Increasing the safety of this community increases the chances that every child, including my two grandchildren attending Irving school, will face fewer threats to their safety.

Thank you.
Lois Thiessen Love
Oak Park Resident
Student Grandparent

Dear Members of the D97 School Board,

I am asking you to prioritize a Secure Firearm Storage Policy and provide D97 parents and guardians with evidence-based information about gun safety and offering specific ways to secure guns safely in the homes that children reside and visit.

As a community we have a responsibility to help keep our children safe. The school has a unique role in raising parental awareness about safety as well. As more households in our community now have firearms, many are not aware about the risks to their families and do not secure these firearms. A school policy will help to address this. Thank you.

Susan Parks.
36 year Oak Park resident, Former Manna and Julian parent

Dear Members of the D97 School Board,

As you know, gun violence is the leading cause of death for children in Illinois. Part of the problem is easy access to guns. For children and teens, access to unsecured firearms contributes to gun deaths caused by unintentional shootings, suicides, and school shootings. Despite this risk to the safety of children, the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms.

That is why I am asking you to prioritize a Secure Firearm Storage Policy and provide D97 parents and guardians with evidence-based information about gun safety and offering specific ways to secure guns safely in the homes that children reside and visit.

I would also like D97 to include sample language for parents and guardians to use to ask about safe firearm storage when their children visit other homes. Parents can feel uncomfortable doing this, and giving them sample language to use will make this 'ask' easier, and help to keep their children safe.

Some facts you may wish to share with administrators and parents:

Children as young as 2 years old are physically able to pull a gun trigger.

Gun violence deaths occur in homes of people of all socio-economic status.

IL had an estimated 545,849 guns sold in 2021.

2021 was the second-highest year for gun sales in the U.S. — behind only 2020, when estimated gun sales topped 21 million.

We need new common sense policies to keep our children safe. I hope the officials of D97 will do all in their power to keep our children safe.

Sincerely,
Mary Swiontoniowski
former Hatch parent and new grandparent

D97 Board Members,

As you all know, school shootings have become a part of a very sad reality in our nation. For children and teens, access to unsecured firearms contributes to gun deaths caused by unintentional shootings, suicides, and school shootings. Despite this risk to the safety of children, the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms. I am asking the D97 Board to distribute information regarding Secure Firearm Storage Policy to D97 parents and guardians. This information about gun safety and offering specific ways to store guns safely in the homes that children reside and visit may help to save the lives of my community's children. According to Everytown USA, 80% of the school shooters obtain the guns used in these horrific events from their family, relatives or friends who have unsecured guns. Please consider distributing information about proper gun storage/securing to all D97 families and help to prevent a tragedy in our school.

Thank you,
Philomena Harbaugh
Former Holmes and Brooks Parent

Dear Members of the D97 School Board,

Gun violence is the leading cause of death for children in Illinois. Lingering trauma from exposure to gun violence affects everything from the ability to maintain attention to overall enrollment numbers and performance on standardized tests. To address all incidents of gun violence at schools and their detrimental effects, a broader platform of solutions is required. Part of the problem is easy access to guns. For children and teens, access to unsecured firearms contributes to gun deaths caused by unintentional shootings, suicides, and school shootings. Despite this risk to the safety of children, the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms.

Evidence suggests that most school shooters obtain their guns from family, relatives, or friends rather than purchasing them legally or illegally. That is why I am asking you to prioritize a Secure Firearm Storage Policy and provide D97 parents and guardians with evidence-based information about gun safety and offering specific ways to secure guns safely in the homes that children reside and visit.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Caitlin Castro, Holmes Parent to an incoming kindergartener

D97 Board Members,

As you all know, school shootings have become a part of a very sad reality in our nation. For children and teens, access to unsecured firearms contributes to gun deaths caused by unintentional shootings, suicides, and school shootings. Despite this risk to the safety of children, the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms. I am asking the D97 Board to distribute information regarding Secure Firearm Storage Policy to D97 parents and guardians. This information about gun safety and offering specific ways to store guns safely in the homes that children reside and visit may help to save the lives of our community's children. According to Everytown USA, 80% of the school shooters obtain the guns used in these horrific events from their family, relatives or friends who have unsecured guns. Please consider distributing information about proper gun storage/securing to all D97 families and help to prevent a tragedy in our school.

Thank you,
Christa Van Ermen, Brooks Parent

Dear members of the D97 school board,

I have lived in Oak Park my entire life. I attended Horace Mann Elementary as a child, and I am now sending two of my three children to Hatch this fall. The seriousness of gun violence in our society can't be overstated, and the tragedies of gun violence in schools is terribly disturbing. As much as I would like to believe that "it can't happen in Oak Park"....we all know that that simply isn't true.

Guns are here in our village and I think we need to address that. For children and teens, access to unsecured firearms contributes to deaths both intentional and accidental. Statistics have shown that the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms in their homes. I am asking you to prioritize a Secure Firearm Storage Policy and provide parents and guardians in D97 with evidence-based information about gun safety along with specific, tangible ways that they can safely secure guns in their homes where their children reside and where their children's friends visit. As an elementary educator myself, I think this is a very sensible thing to do.

Thank you,
Kate L'Heureux

Please consider a secure firearm storage policy for the district. While my children are graduates of D97 and not currently enrolled, as a citizen of the OP I want to share my concerns. Nobody wants to have to have this discussion but it's imperative that we do. Guns are way too easy to access, an angry child or grown-up with access to guns can cause incredible and irreversible damage to students, teachers and staff, and to the reputation and well-being of the school district and community.

With the stress families are under, suicide by firearms is another awful possibility

Please consider this

Thank you

Meg Liebreich

Dear Members of the D97 School Board,

As you know, we have been asking the board to pass a policy that would require D97 parents and guardians to receive evidence-based information about secure firearm storage. I understand that there is progress being made with the administration's commitment to communicating this information and moving forward with a formal policy sometime this fall. I thank you for considering this effort with the seriousness it deserves.

Gun violence is the leading cause of death for children and teens and it's imperative that school leaders take on the responsibility that they can to prevent firearm injury and death. Because unsecured firearms contribute to unintentional shootings, suicides, and school shootings, District 97 must prioritize a secure firearm storage policy.

The parents, teachers, and school staff members that I hear from are scared to go back to school. District 97 does so many wonderful things to create true Community Schools here in Oak Park. And much of those efforts to foster a healthy, supportive, and equitable school climate are essential to violence prevention. But we need to use every tool in our toolbox to prevent death, injury and trauma to gun violence. D97 has an opportunity to lead the Oak Park community and its neighbors in passing a meaningful secure firearm storage policy, and should prioritize doing so.

Thank you,

Jenna Leving Jacobson, Hatch Parent

Dear members of the D97 school board,

I have lived in Oak Park for close to 40 years. My 4 children attended oak park schools and 4 of my grandchildren are currently attending schools here in Oak Park. The seriousness of gun violence in our society can't be overstated. And the tragedies of gun violence in schools is terribly disturbing. As much as I would like to say that "it can't happen in Oak Park"....we all know that that simply isn't true. Guns are here in our village and I think we need to address that. For children and teens, access to unsecured firearms contributes to deaths both intentional and accidental. Statistics have shown that the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms in their homes. I am asking you to prioritize a Secure Firearm Storage Policy and provide parents and guardians in D97 with evidence-based information about gun safety along with specific, tangible ways that they can safely secure guns in their homes where their children reside and where their children's friends visit. As a healthcare provider I think this is a very sensible thing to do.

Thank you,

Patty Boblick, RN

Dear Members of the D97 School Board,

I apologize I did not get this email sent in time for the meeting tonight, but I still wanted to send it. As you know, gun violence is the leading cause of death for children in Illinois. Part of the problem is easy access to guns. For children and teens, access to unsecured firearms contributes to gun deaths caused by unintentional shootings, suicides, and school shootings. Despite this risk to the safety of children, the majority of gun owners do not secure their firearms.

That is why I am asking you to prioritize a Secure Firearm Storage Policy and provide D97 parents and guardians with evidence-based information about gun safety and offering specific ways to secure guns safely in the homes that children reside and visit.

Thank you,
Eden Himidian, future Hatch Parent

Dear D97 Board Members,

I'm a parent of two students at Beye and Julian. I'm looking for concrete actions that we can take as a community to help prevent gun violence. I ask that you pass a secure firearm storage policy in the district. Each school would be required to provide safe firearm storage information to all families in the school community. The parents or guardians would be required to acknowledge that they have received and read the information. More information about the types of information that a school could provide to their community members can be found at <https://besmartforkids.org/>.

Thank you in advance for considering a secure firearm storage policy for D97.

Sincerely,
Morgen Alexander-Young
Parent of Beye and Julian students

Dear Superintendent Shah and D97 Board Members,

My name is Anna Pfenniger. I am the mother of an incoming Kindergartener. I am also a physician and scientist, and care deeply about the health and wellbeing of my child and his classmates. Although not an expert (I am a cardiologist - not an immunologist, virologist or pediatrician) I have followed the evolving science regarding Covid and its impact on children and adults. Based on the evidence, it is clear that we should avoid Covid infections, particularly repeated infections to reduce not only short-term, but also long-term harm to all. Meaningful mitigations put in place in school, while not perfect, play a large role in protecting both children and staff, and help with the goal of maximizing in-school instruction. For this reason, I am asking that the board consider these two items:

A. Air quality investment

This is the best mitigation strategy when evaluating cost/benefit ratio, particularly as it does not rely on personal behavior - parents, children and teachers do not have to do anything special. In addition, better air quality at an institutional level does not only reduce the spread of Covid, but also any other airborne disease, and potentially also helps eliminate some allergens. Research has shown that better air quality is associated with better health outcomes (fewer respiratory illnesses and headaches), fewer absences and improved academic performance. With these goals in mind, I am asking that the board strive for excellence in air quality: this involves at least 6 or more air exchanges per hour, air purifiers (HEPA filters) in every classroom, and continuous CO2 monitoring. With these strategies, other schools have managed to avoid any in-school transmission, even during the Omicron wave (see example here , <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-01/brisbane-school-no-covid-omicron-outbreaks-term-1/100956850>).

B. Contingency planning

Although the CDC rolled back many recommendations for this upcoming school year, it did add guidance for strategies when the community spread is high. I ask that this board delineate and enforce a plan for if and when community spread is high to prevent, rather than respond to outbreaks. In particular, the CDC specified that schools should take additional steps to: increase outdoor air intake, improve air filtration including opening windows on buses, using portable air cleaners, and shifting activities and meals outdoors. In addition, the CDC recommends universal masking indoors if community level is high, and encourages screening testing when returning from breaks. I ask the board and D97 staff to develop contingency plans following these recommendations.

While I recognize that this district cannot be asked to be the only one reacting to the Covid pandemic, I strongly believe that children's health is paramount to the core mission of D97, which is effective and equitable education. This encompasses limiting Covid transmission in school with these measures.

Sincerely,
Anna Pfenniger

Dear Board Members,

I heard that D97 plans to cease screening tests for COVID and discontinue the public dashboard, in order to be more consistent with D200. Why would we make Oak Park elementary and middle schools on par with the high school and less inclusive by ditching a free, optional screening service? Parents are sending their kids to school unwell, and without masks. Without the schools maintaining any protections for our community, I'm extremely concerned. During the 2021-22 school year, SHIELD testing prevented further spread by nearly 800 D97 community members. Without SHIELD and without meaningful CO2 monitoring or air purifiers well-dispersed throughout schools, what are we left with? Please adopt a plan for if and when community spread is approaching high to keep kids healthy and in school.

Sincerely,
Maggie McMahon

Superintendent Shah and Board Members,

I'm a parent of Two Holmes Hawks (now entering 3rd and 5th grade). As you meet tonight to weigh in on the Covid mitigation plan, I know that everyone is tired, exhausted and ready to be done with COVID. Unfortunately, this virus isn't done with us and continues to surprise us with surges and changes.

The answer to Covid, does not have to be to wave our hands in frustration while doing nothing. We still have the ability to put in place meaningful mitigations that while not perfect will provide some protections and help with the goal of maximizing in-school instruction. To that end, I am asking that the board consider a few items. Meaningful action on air quality, testing during periods of medium and high community spread, and transparency.

Better air quality is an institutional level mitigation that doesn't require parents or children to do anything. It has been proven to impact not just the spread of Covid, but other airborne diseases. I am asking that the board demand excellence in air quality. This means at least 6 or more air exchanges per hour, continuous CO2 monitoring and air purifiers in every single classroom. The former president of ASHRAE and Chair of the Epidemic Task Force, Bill Bahnfleth, has noted that these are all proven methods that will meaningfully improve air quality.

The second ask is to bring back regular shield testing (on an opt-in basis) when we are in periods of medium and high transmission. This will enable us to catch outbreaks and surges early and prevent further spread. For most of the 2021-22 school year, over 90% of D97 families opted in to this (free) service. It helped our district not only manage and prevent outbreaks; it also helped the broader community stay healthy.

I recognize that this district is not interested in nor can it be the only one tasked with stopping the spread of COVID, but we can and should try and maximize having healthy kids in school. The way to do this is to ensure that kids are healthy and able to attend school.

I also ask that the district continue to operate with transparency by regularly updating its dashboard regarding the health and well-being of the D97 community.

Lastly, I should note even as the CDC recently rolled back many of its recommendations for schools beginning the 2022-23 school year, it added detailed guidance for how schools can keep kids and the community safe when community spread is high. I ask that this board adopt a plan for if and when community spread is high to prevent having to move classrooms to remote instruction. Namely, the CDC detailed that schools should take additional steps to increase outdoor air intake and improve air filtration, including opening windows on buses, using portable air cleaners, and shifting activities outdoors. The CDC also recommended universal indoor masking if community level is high, and encouraged screening testing when returning from breaks. I urge the board and D97 staff to develop contingency plans following the CDC guidance to prevent (rather than respond to) outbreaks.

Regards,
Ranga Bodla
Parent of Two Holmes Hawks

Superintendent Shah and Board Members,

As a D97 parent and public health researcher, I am writing to encourage the board to take two key actions to keep students & staff healthy and in school this year. Specifically, we need high quality ventilation and COVID testing during periods of medium and high community spread. Ventilation improves learning and prevents lost learning time due to respiratory illnesses, allergies & asthma. The board should demand excellence in air quality - especially given the federal funds made available for this exact purpose. Schools in Boston and Colorado are leading the way with real-time, continuous CO2 monitoring, with a public dashboard - so the community can see the air quality for themselves.

It is also crucial to bring back regular, optional Shield testing when we are in periods of medium and high COVID transmission - as we have been all summer. Without this testing, it is impossible for the Board to know whether schools are safe or when to implement stronger protections.

I encourage the Board to remember last January, when schools were closed due to the sheer lack of healthy staff. Since that point, you have only removed more and more protections. How will you prevent future school closures then?

Sincerely,
Maria Pyra

As a pediatrician and parent in D97, I advocated for schools to reopen when it was clear that we knew how to keep everyone safe. Now we have the tools to continue doing so, and I am asking that we continue to use them going into the 2022-2023 school year.

1) Please continue to prioritize ventilation and clean air in our schools, with a goal of excellence in our district. As other districts have done, we can aim for continuous and transparent CO2 monitoring, 6 air changes per hour and HEPA filters in every classroom and public space.

2) We also have the opportunity to benefit from free Shield testing once again, which most parents in D97 took advantage of. In periods of medium and high transmission, this prevents worsening outbreaks which impact the health of our entire community. At a minimum, we could use them strategically as the CDC suggests during periods of return to school or after vacations and before/after big events, and for groups that the CDC classifies as higher risk, such as choirs and sports teams (this would also include every elementary student in music class); however, from a continuity standpoint, it would make more sense to continue testing on a regular basis for everyone who opts in.

3) Other districts including CPS continue to recognize that masks are still an extremely valuable tool in this pandemic. It is very difficult to ask kids to continue to wear masks when their peers are not. We are going to continue to have outbreaks if people can remain in school without masks after 5 days of isolation and when exposed, especially without adequate testing and ventilation.

According to the CDC's latest guidance, at a high community level universal indoor masking in schools is recommended. In addition: "People who have known or suspected exposure to COVID-19 should also wear a well-fitting mask or respirator around others for 10 days from their last exposure, regardless of vaccination status or history of prior infection."

We need to keep in mind the CDC's statement that "Schools might need to require masking in settings such as classrooms or during activities to protect students with immunocompromising conditions or other conditions that increase their risk for getting very sick with COVID-19."]

We know how to keep everyone in school and healthy. COVID continues to cause ongoing illness and disruptions, and risk of long term health concerns. Please use the tools that we know work.

Thank you,
Robin Kalish

Dear Superintendent Shah and D97 Board Members,

Thank you for your commitment to our community as we kick off the 2022-23 school year! As you meet, I ask that you consider putting in place two meaningful policies in relation to the pandemic: investment in air quality improvement and plans for if there is high community spread of COVID. First, research shows that better air quality is associated with enhanced cognitive function, improved academic performance, fewer absences, and better health outcomes. This is a protection that does not require kids or parents to do anything, and there is a rare opportunity to take advantage of available funding. We should take this opportunity to meet "superb" standards of air quality in D97 classrooms and communal spaces, meaning at least 6 or more air exchanges per hour and continuous CO2 monitoring. Second, the CDC recently added detailed guidance for how schools can adapt when community spread is high. I ask this board to adopt a plan to follow the CDC guidance of increasing outdoor air intake and improving air filtration, using portable air cleaners, shifting activities outdoors, masking, and screening testing when returning from breaks. I urge the board and D97 staff to develop contingency plans to prevent outbreaks. I also ask that the district continue to regularly update its dashboard.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the health of our community.
Meghan Paulas

Hello School Board members and Superintendent Dr. Shah,

I believe that we are all working to keep kids in school and learning in safe environments. I hope that we can agree that the best way to achieve this goal is for the students and staff to remain healthy.

Research shows that good air quality is associated with fewer absences, better health outcomes, and improved academic performance. Reliably cleaning indoor air is an institutional intervention that the District can take that requires nothing of educators, learners, or parents. As part of creating an excellent learning environment, the District should address the following ventilation, filtration, and monitoring improvements.

Please ensure the ventilation systems are achieving at least six air changes an hour, regardless of weather.

The District stated that they had achieved five air changes last year by “opening the HVAC dampers and allowing 100% outside air into the spaces as weather allows.” However, weather does not allow these dampers to be 100% open, 100% of the time. The systems will fall short of their targeted air changes on cold days when the dampers cannot be 100% open.

Please filter the air using MERV-13 (or higher) filters and operating air purifiers in all occupied spaces

Cleaning the air is one of the most effective ways to curb transmission of airborne viruses. Filtration is even more important when ventilation systems are not achieving the expected number of air changes or there are people shedding viruses in the room.

Please begin continuously monitoring the air quality inside rooms

A single point-in-time reading reveals very little about a room’s air quality over time. Indoor air quality can change dramatically based on weather, occupancy, time, and HVAC system performance. It is important to consistently monitor fully occupied rooms, particularly at the end of the day when readings will have built up to their highest levels. Monitoring in-room air quality will alert staff the moment a system unexpectedly fails and identify ill-performing equipment over time.

Without these improvements, about one in three D97 students caught COVID during the 2021-22 school year. This is significantly higher than the [one in twelve Chicago Public School students who caught COVID](#) during the same time. Yet, [CPS plans](#) to do much more than D97 to keep their kids healthy and in school.

D97 must do more, not less, if it wants to keep kids healthy and in school. At minimum, D97 must excel in cleaning the air inside its buildings and continue to report its student and staff COVID cases to the community transparently.

As always, thank you for your consideration and service.

Alicia Chastain

(Mother to two D97 students)

To D97 Board Members and Superintendent Shah,

I am writing today in the hopes of encouraging ongoing covid mitigations for the 2022-2023 school year. Efforts such as improving indoor air quality by using HEPA air purifiers in each classroom, encouraging indoor masking when community spread level is medium or high (which it currently is per CDC), weekly SHIELD testing, and recommending vaccinations and boosters for all eligible populations.

Please consider ongoing mitigations in order to help as many people in our community to remain healthy and not causing interruptions to the school year. Yes, we'd all love for this pandemic to be over. But if we can prevent fewer cases our community will be healthier in the long run, allowing for everyone to be safer and hopefully thrive!

Thank you for your time and we look forward to the school year ahead!
Sonya Strenge

5. ACTION ITEMS

5.1 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

Hurd Johnson moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, approves the consent agenda as presented.

- 5.1.1 Approval of Minutes from June 14, 2022 Board Meeting
- 5.1.2 Bill List
- 5.1.3 Personnel
- 5.1.4 Approval : District 97 SY23 Mitigation Resolution
- 5.1.5 Approval : Tri-District Consortium Agreement (6.14.22)
- 5.1.6 Approval : SY23 Crossing Guard Contract (6.14.22)
- 5.1.7 Approval : Curriculum Donation and Recycling Request
- 5.1.8 Approval : Irving PTO Donation
- 5.1.9 Approval : Oak Park and River Forest Community Foundation Donation
- 5.1.10 Approval : Policy 7:285 Press Plus Update
- 5.1.11 Approval : Contracts over \$25,000
- 5.1.12 Approval : Authorization to Publish Notice of Budget Public Hearing

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Moore, Kinhal

Nays: None

Absent: Spurlock

Motion passed.

6. DISCUSSION AND ACTION

6.1. Revised Curricular Resource Adoption (4.26.22)

(Presented by Dr. Ebony Lofton & Dr. Tawanda Lawrence)

Updated Resource Recommendation for Adoption

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the recommendation for the acquisition of instructional materials that will be presented to the Board of Education for action on August 16, 2022.

Background

One of the areas of instructional work we are exploring for SY22-23 is to design innovative ways for schools to engage each District 97 student and family in setting individual, standards-based learning goals. The department seeks to ensure that we support the provision of academically challenging, research based, culturally responsive, relevant and updated instructional materials closest to where learning occurs with students and teachers in our classrooms - that considers the following:

- Responsiveness to the work of our teacher teams and the consensus built around the curricular resource adoptions as a result of the resource review process and subsequent pilots.
- Continued alignment of curricular resources between Brooks Middle School and Julian Middle School

- Alignment between the world language departments in the district’s elementary and middle schools
- Acknowledgement of the impact of the global pandemic on student learning and achievement
- The connection of the acquisition of curricular resources to the district’s learning around the Universal

Design for Learning Framework as well as the Danielson Framework for Teaching

Recommendation

Below are the updated recommendations for each curricular resource that was presented at the April 26th Board of Education meeting; the current status of the recommendation; the cost of the resource and the rationale for placing a hold on the recommendation alongside actionable next steps, if applicable:

*Complete document is available on the Board website under meeting packet information

Motion

Moore moved, seconded by Ross Dribin that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, moves to approve the purchase of curricular materials, not to exceed \$755,553.00, from ESSER III grant funds as presented on August 16, 2022.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Moore, Kinhal
 Nays: None
 Absent: Spurlock
 Motion passed.

6.2 CLIC Renewal

(Presented by Patrick King, Senior Director of Finance)

Collective Liability Insurance Cooperative

Oak Park District 97 has been a member of the Collective Liability Insurance Cooperative (CLIC) since July 1, 1991. This property and liability insurance cooperative was established during the 1983-1984 school year with only eight school districts as founding members. Today, the pool now has 188 member school districts.

Coverages through CLIC includes general liability, auto liability and physical damage, property, boiler & machinery insurance, school board legal liability insurance, student accident, cyber liability/identity theft, crisis protection, and pollution liability insurance. The 2021-2022 annual premium was \$330,246 and the proposed 2022-2023 premium is \$355,085, an increase of 7.5%. Attached to this memo is a cost sheet listing the variable and fixed costs that make up the annual program cost. Please note the historical annual premium cost chart below:

2015-2016	\$256,188
2016-2017	\$232,974
2017-2018	\$211,450
2018-2019	\$203,169
2019-2020	\$217,873
2020-2021	\$258,941
2021-2022	\$330,246
2022-2023	\$355,085

Attached is a memo from Risk Program Administrators, the co-op’s administrator, explaining the increase is mainly due to rate increases on property, school board legal liability, excess liability, and cyber

liability. Rising inflation, construction costs, and severe losses from storm throughout the United States have also caused carriers to obtain reinsurance at increased costs.

The cooperative uses the average loss ratios for the previous five years in the calculation of the 2022-2023 individual renewal rates—see attached. The overall 5-year loss ratio increased slightly for D97 compared to the prior year. While the majority of the years in the calculation were stable, the district had a large loss ratio in 2017/18 of 552.8%, following the freezing and bursting of pipes in January of 2018 at Lincoln School. There was a slight increase in claims payments for the 2019/20 school year as well. The school board legal liability loss ratio has been as good as it can be, with a loss ratio of zero—also attached.

*Complete document is available on the Board website under meeting packet information

Motion

Moore moved, seconded by Kearney that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, moves to approve the renewal of its contract with the Collective Liability Insurance Cooperative (CLIC) for the 2022-2023 school year at a premium of \$355,085 as outlined in the memorandum to the superintendent dated August 16, 2022.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Moore, Kinhal
Nays: None
Absent: Spurlock
Motion passed.

6.3 SELF Renewal

(Presented By: Patrick King, Senior Director of Finance)

School District 97 participates in the SELF Workers’ Compensation Insurance Cooperative. Founded in 1986, the SELF Insurance Cooperative is self-funded, self-governed and comprised of 83 member school districts in the Chicagoland area. Rates for individual school districts within the SELF Cooperative are determined based on a combination of the overall pool performance and individual district performance.

The estimated total due to SELF will be \$308,458 for the July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023 plan year. The Large Deductible Contribution amount (at the \$25,000 deductible level) is \$195,150, to which is added an \$121,324 replenishment contribution from prior years claims expense activity as well as a \$1,500 administrative fee. However, the district will have a credit (dividend) applied of \$61,534 and a \$52,018 debit due to the payroll audit, from the 7/1/20 – 6/30/21 policy period, for an invoice total of \$308,458. Please note the annual premium cost chart below:

2015-2016	\$332,261
2016-2017	\$208,978
2017-2018	\$243,982
2018-2019	\$205,614
2019-2020	\$126,310
2020-2021	\$193,032
2021-2022	\$251,142
2022-2023	\$308,458

The increase in the premium over the prior year is largely a result of the District’s claim experience. The replenishment contribution noted above of \$121,324 represents the increase in claims charged to the District over the prior year. The prior year replenishment was only \$18,305.

The SELF pool continues to have excellent experience as a cooperative. Attached is the Executive Summary from SELF, along with the quotation, which includes highlights of the rates, cost factors, and plan design from the 2022-2023 renewal presentation.

It is our hope that District 97 continues to proactively promote safe working conditions, maintaining a safe work environment, reporting claims promptly, and actively managing claims so the District continues to see favorable rates and experience ratings. The administration recommends approval of the 2022-2023 SELF Workers' Compensation Insurance Fund renewal rates as presented.

Motion

Kinhal moved, seconded by Hurd Johnson that Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, moves to approve renewal of its contract with the School Employees Loss Fund (SELF) for the 2022-2023 school year at a premium of \$308,458 as outlined in the memorandum to the superintendent dated August 16, 2022.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Moore, Kinhal
Nays: None
Absent: Spurlock
Motion passed.

6.4 Approval of IGA Relocation Agreement

(Presented by Dr. Felicia Starks & Jim Hackett Security and School Safety Manager)

Moore moved, seconded by Kearney that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, moves to approve the Intergovernmental Relocation Agreement with Oak Park and River Forest High School. This Agreement shall be in effect for a term of three (3) years from the date the Agreement is executed by both parties.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Moore, Kinhal
Nays: None
Absent: Spurlock
Motion passed.

6.5 Approval of Hourly Compensation Request

(Presented by Dr. Tim Kilrea Interim Senior Director of Human Resources)

SY23 Lunchroom Worker Hourly Compensation

On July 20, 2020 the Board of Education approved a gradual increase in pay for lunchroom managers. The pay for lunchroom managers was approved for SY 22 to be \$18.91 per hour and for SY 23 \$19.31 per hour. On July 21, 2021 the Board of Education approved for lunchroom workers to be paid \$15 per hour while playground supervisors were being paid \$18 per hour. This difference in pay made it very difficult to hire lunchroom workers during SY 22 when they could make more money supervising the lunchroom and recess versus serving students their National School Lunch Program lunch on a daily basis.

Hallway monitors, playground managers, lunchroom managers and lunchroom workers are not affiliated with any union/labor group. All these positions are either making \$18.00 per hour or more except for lunchroom workers. The HR Co-Interim Senior Directors recommend to the Board of Education to increase the lunchroom worker pay to \$18 per hour. This makes the positions of lunchroom worker;

playground supervisor and hallway monitor at the same pay level to make them all more marketable to fill in a timely manner.

The number of lunchroom workers this would impact is thirty-eight. The cost of hiring 38 lunchroom workers at \$15.00 hour for three hours per day is \$297,540. The cost of hiring 38 lunchroom workers at \$18.00 per hour for three hours per day is \$357,048. This is a difference of \$59,508.

Motion

Ross Dribin moved, seconded by Moore that the Board of Education, of Oak Park Elementary School District 97, moves to approve the hourly compensation increase of lunchroom staff to \$18 as presented to the Board on August 16, 2022.

Ayes: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Moore, Kinhal
Nays: None
Absent: Spurlock
Motion passed.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

7.1 Presentation of 2022-2023 Tentative Budget
(Patrick King, Senior Director of Finance)

The Finance Overview and Review Committee (FORC) reviewed the FY2023 Tentative Budget at its meeting on August 8, 2022.

The FY2023 Tentative Budget is prepared and must be made available for public inspection and placed on display for at least thirty (30) days. A public notice will be placed in the newspaper stating that the Tentative Budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 has been prepared in tentative form as required by law and will be available for public inspection.

An in-person public hearing will be held on September 27, 2022 for the purpose of considering and acting upon such budget.

Details of the tentative budget are available on the district’s website at www.op97.org

8. SPECIAL REPORTS

8.1 COVID-19 Mitigation Planning Update

This year District 97 has worked closely with District 200 to align planning, in consultation with the Oak Park Department of Public Health, in order to streamline processes and create a coherent approach to COVID-19 for families. The full plan can be viewed on the district’s website at www.op97.org.

8.2 Administrative Update

(Presented by Dr. Ushma Shah, Superintendent)

Dr. Shah provided the Board of Education and Community with, “The First 60-days: Superintendent Update”. Within this report, Dr. Shah provided an overview of the SY22-23 District Work Streams. “Be curious”, “Be safe and healthy”, “Be a learning designer”. She also noted the guiding principles:

Affirm – the strength of our community of public school professionals.

Prioritize – student access to in-person core instruction time with a professional educator who has designed standards-based learning and engagement experience.

Model – a participatory, cross-functional, and solution-seeking approach internally and with agency partners.

Reinforce – a foundation of operational excellence and high-fidelity use of public resources (time, people, money and technology).

Complete details of Dr. Shah’s report are available by viewing the livestream of this board meeting on the districts YouTube channel.

9. BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

BOARD
ASSIGNMENTS

Board member Kearney notes that the Policy Committee, which includes Board member Kinhal and Administration began conversation around potentially drafting policy for Safe Gun Storage. These conversations have been productive, and we are working to gather information. Kearney also notes approaching this effort in collaboration with our village partners, so there is consistency in messaging. He concludes with understanding the immediate need to get schools up and running for students, but will provide updates on this topic as they are available.

10. CONCLUDING ITEMS

10.1 Board Remarks

CONCLUDING
ITEMS

President Kim, I hope everyone has a good start to the school year.

Vice President Hurd Johnson, taking a look at all the emails of public comment, impact and opinions received. It is important that we value not only our own opinion but those of others as well. Scope and Perspective. Asking board members to be mindful, and community to also be mindful of this process and everyone’s commitment to supporting our students and schools.

Board members will be looking forward to participating in events as such with Juneteenth, Fourth of July Parade and Day In Our Village this school year.

11. ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

All Five Present Members of the Board were in agreement that the meeting be adjourned by voice vote. There being no further business to conduct, President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 10:48 p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary