

Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park
October 26, 2021 Regular Meeting

This meeting was held in-person and virtually using Zoom during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. One or more of the board members met in-person and everyone else were virtual.

President Kim called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Kim, Kearney, Ross Dribin, Hurd Johnson, Kinhal, Spurlock, Moore

Absent: None

Also Present: Interim Superintendent Dr. Patricia Wernet, Associate Superintendent of Education Felicia Starks Turner, Interim Senior Director of Human Resources Tim Kilrea, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Senior Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Ebony Lofton, Senior Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Tawanda Lawrence, Senior Director of Special Education Donna Middleton, Security and School Safety Manager Jim Hackett, and Lonya Boose Board Secretary.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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, Student disciplinary cases 5 ILCS 120/2(C)(1)(2)(9) at 6:09 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

OPEN SESSION

President Kim motioned that the Board move into Open Session at 7:03 p.m. All present members of the Board were in agreement. The Board convened in Open Session at 7:03 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

PUBLIC
COMMENT

Dear D97 community and BOE,

The District has tried to abdicate responsibility for not having a Test-to-stay policy in District 97 and simply give in to the opinions of the Oak Park Health Department. Although IDPH does not have jurisdiction in this case, their published guidance not only allows but **recommends** Test-to-Stay policies to keep more kids in school: “ISBE and IDPH now allow a strategy for close contacts to remain in school following exposure to COVID-19 through a Test to Stay protocol, as has been documented by the CDC.” (source: <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/school-guidance.html>). This same guidance comments on the value of NAAT, PCR and rapid antigen tests as part of the strategy to keep kids in school, even though OPHD has convinced the village that anything but SHIELD testing is not the “gold standard”. (Gold standard being inaccurate language used to provoke fear and compliance)

The District has a role to play in working with the Oak Park Health Department to find solutions that maximize the time children spend in school and help the local health department fulfill their duty “to identify the *least restrictive means of controlling the transmission* of the disease” (Section 690.1315 - Responsibilities and Duties of the Certified Local Health Department – Illinois Administrative Code). On average 8-10 students have been placed on a 14 day quarantine, after being identified as close contacts,

resulting in well over 200 students missing vital in person instruction. While it would be easy to calculate the OPHD and D97 claim to not be tracking how many close contacts ever turned positive...likely because the number is zero to less than 5 (or 0-2.5%). Or we could look to LAUSD that quarantined 30,000 students and found 63 later tested positive (2%).

The Oak Park Department of Health has expressed concern about a Test-to-Stay policy until there is published data. Fortunately, the District *can provide this published data*. A study published in The Lancet demonstrated that a Test-to-Stay policy was no less safe than self-isolation (source: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)01908-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)01908-5/fulltext)). Additionally, the CDC has published results from Utah showing how many hours of classroom instruction were saved with a Test-to-Stay policy in certain schools with no increase in the rate of positive tests (source: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7021e2.htm>). Additionally, we know that at least 30 states are utilizing test to stay, which means we surely have plenty of data to review.

While I understand D97 formally requested a Test to Stay option to be recommended by OPHD, there has been no substantive movement on this. It appears as though D97 is not motivated to keep the most amount of students in class. Nor, does it appear that OPHD is provided the least restrictive means of controlling transmission. I strongly encourage this BOE to hold the district admin accountable to ensuring all students are receiving their access Free and Appropriate Public Education.

Sincerely,
Kate Odom

Email #1

If the CDC states, "A person with COVID-19 is considered infectious starting 2 days before they develop symptoms, or 2 days before the date of their positive test if they do not have symptoms." Why do we not use that as the start date for quarantining? Especially for siblings of positive tested students?

Email #2

The CDC defines a Close Contact as "someone who was less than 6 feet away from infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinical diagnosis) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes)."

Schools are strict about enforcing there be no more than 15 minutes of unmasked eating period and lunch is always at the same time each day. I do not understand how a student can accumulate more than 15 minutes of unmasked time over a 24 hr period purely from Lunch exposure.

If students are expected to quarantine regardless, why do we not allow the children to return to their usual lunch time duration of 18 or more minutes?

Email #3

We had been informed that a student is not permitted to test back into school, because of equity constraints. Therefore, only tests performed by SHIELD through the school would be accepted. At which time, we were also informed this is not possible, because the school does not have the capacity to do so.

Although each week a student is allocated a test from SHIELD. At Julian Middle School there are even students piloting a trial that these tests can be sent home with a student and returned for processing. We asked if it was possible for us to bring our student to the school (stand on the street, if they are not allowed on school grounds) on the day the school has SHIELD performing tests to give their saliva sample and be tested with the rest of the school's tests. This would have been a D97 school administered SHIELD test, on day 7 from exposure, which was already designated for our

student. Again, this was not permitted. At what point do we stop saying it's a capability issue, but rather an administrator created issue?

Email #4

Why does a physician and/or pharmacist have authority for testing back into school when a student has been identified for exhibiting Covid Symptoms, but not for when a student has been identified for being a Close Contact. Similarly, why is there not the same equitable uncertainty for both instances?

Thank you,

Karley Wyss parent of a currently quarantined student

From Chris Morgan, District 97 Parent

Submitted for Public Comment. If the entire contents cannot be read in the allotted time I ask that it be reviewed by the Board and Communications teams as there are both demonstrable factual inaccuracies and misleading statements in the District 97 Fact Checker.

While I applaud the district's effort to clear up confusion with a Fact Checker, I think it only sows more confusion with misleading, incomplete, and inaccurate statements and ask that it be updated accordingly.

Here are few examples:

FALSE STATEMENT: "Confirmatory testing is needed after a positive SHIELD result."

While the District is correct to say that SHIELD testing does not require confirmatory testing. The response expands that statement to say that District will not accept outside testing after a SHIELD test that may reveal a false positive. Those are separate issues. Although the false positive rate of SHIELD testing is quite low (0.1 - 0.2%), with a district of about 5,000 students, then mathematically we should expect 5-10 false positives. We have already seen this happen. While a parent should feel no NEED to get a confirmatory test after a positive SHIELD test, it does not necessarily follow that the District should not accept outside testing by that same logic. If we have 5-10 false positives per week and averaged 6 students quarantined per student that tests positive (based on current week data of 7 positive tests and 42 quarantined students) then we might expect to be falsely quarantining 30-60 students per week. In fact at our current Oak Park Village transmission rates with 48 new cases last week in a population of about 50,000, then we would expect about 5 true positives and 5 false positives per week even at 99.9% specificity. If half of our positive tests could be false, then it makes no sense to not accept outside testing. Whether or confirmatory testing is accepted is a separate matter (see next question) but it does not follow that confirmatory testing is necessarily banned just because it isn't needed. Just because popcorn from Lake Theatre is so good that it does not NEED more butter, does not mean that they ban more butter on the popcorn.

FALSE STATEMENT: "District 97 has the ability to develop procedures for confirmatory testing."

The answer to this statement is also misleading. The answer includes the following statement "According to our public health director, creating guidance that does not comply with state rules could negatively impact the village's ability to continue to provide state funded SHIELD testing for free in our community."

The use of the word “could” (my emphasis) in here makes it misleading to call the original statement false. In fact, IDPH has published the following statement about COVID-19 testing in schools “Public health officials and school nurses will work with providers to order confirmatory testing when needed to minimize the risk of a false positive or false negative result. In simplest terms, if the results are not what would be expected (e.g., positive in an asymptomatic person or negative in a person with COVID-like illness with a known exposure), confirmatory testing is recommended.” (source: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/COVID-Testing-Schools-FAQ.pdf>). If the Public Health Director is having conversations like this, then these policies should be something that is published. Much as our Public Health department is skeptical of Test-to-Stay policies until there is published data, I am skeptical of conversations that contradict published statements from IDPH. Side note, there is published data on Test-to-Stay demonstrating it is no less safe than self-isolation (source: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)01908-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)01908-5/fulltext)). Again, the point is not that confirmatory testing be something that is required after a positive SHIELD test, but we should acknowledge the math that about half of our positive tests could be false positives and if a student is asymptomatic, it only makes sense to perform another test. More importantly, this fact checking answer is misleading.

FALSE STATEMENT: "District 97 has the authority to determine quarantine lengths."

This is also misleading. The answer here even states that the ODPH has given Oak Park schools two options. Within those two options, District 97 DOES have an option to choose. The answer here seems to be that District 97 has made their choice based on the current rate of community transmission and challenges with testing. Yes, we understand that the District cannot simply choose to make up a quarantine length out of thin air, but this answer is once again misleading. The District has made a choice here about quarantine lengths and has also made a choice not to find a way to accommodate the required testing even as we quarantine large numbers of students and separate them from their classes. These are choices that the district has made.

FALSE STATEMENT: "Not all District 97 employees are required to be vaccinated."

This is actually a true statement. The answer makes that very clear: “Per agreements with the district's four collective bargaining units, all employees must receive their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by Sep. 19, 2021, and the final dose no later than Oct. 19, 2021, or be tested for COVID-19 twice weekly.”

Now that Oct 19 has passed, a District 97 employee that is tested for COVID-19 twice weekly is not required to be vaccinated.

To: D97 Board Members
From: Fabian Wyss
Occasion: D97 Board Meeting; Tuesday, October 26, 2021
Topic: Current Practice of Quarantine for Students with Close Contact

Statement:

Respected D97 Board Members,

The CDC defines a 14-day quarantine as the safest quarantine option, 14 days being double the maximum observed incubation period. This option does not balance safety versus burden, it is the option with the absolute priority for safety. The CDC does not recommend imposing a 14-day quarantine. Instead, the

CDC recommends several shorter alternatives that appropriately balance safety versus burden. One of these alternatives is the 10-day quarantine with a negative PCR test on day 8. This alternative bears a 0.3% chance that the child might still carry the virus and is entirely acceptable according to CDC and IDPH. In Oak Park however we also require testing on days 11, 12, 13 and 14 to meet our own gold standard.

D97 is then adding another requirement that says that these additional tests must be conducted through the school system. This has led to bizarre situations in which families present a letter from their pediatric physician that states that their child may safely return to school, yet the school does not let the child return and insists on additional 4 days of quarantine.

I have been told two reasons for this. One is related to quality of the covid-19 tests. To that I must say that we are already at a very low likelihood and it is completely unnecessary to place additional quality requirements on tests. The second reason is related to equity. To that I must say that childcare for an additional 4 days of quarantine is much more expensive than a PCR test and four subsequent self-tests. The self-tests are available in any pharmacy for a total of \$50.- and there are numerous places that offer the PCR test at no cost. Furthermore, if the supervision of a child placed into quarantine for four days is expected, then likewise you could expect that this person is taking the child to the healthcare provider to be tested. Organizing additional childcare is more difficult for minorities who are more often essential workers and at risk of losing their job, income or both if staying home to supervise their child. Therefore, your current policy does not produce more equity, it further amplifies the inequities that exist in our community.

I therefore request that you drop the requirement that the additional, Oak Park specific tests are conducted through the school system so that we can meet the gold standard and stick to the overall accepted 10-day-quarantine.

Good Evening,

Why are public comments read but never discussed at board meetings? Are they discussed in the executive session? It's very frustrating as a parent to submit public comments on important matters, they get read, and then poof, nothing. No discussion at the meeting, no follow-up, no insight, nada. I implore the D97 Board and Leadership team to address this matter.

Thank you,
Julie Spyrison

I am in favor of unmasking the kids.
I am in favor of letting them eat lunch together instead of alternating rows eating for 15 minutes each.
I am in favor of letting them converse during lunch instead of watching videos in silence.
I am in favor of letting the kids play together and run around freely during recess instead of keeping them in zones separated by classroom.

Enough of our "gold-standard" COVID-mitigation protocols already. Enough singing through double masks. Enough.

Let's encourage genuine health: movement, communication, the flow of oxygen, play, interaction. This is already the norm outside of school.

Thanks,

Karen Thomas

District 97 BOE and community:

When the school year started, parents had an option of signing up for test-to-stay, as it was marketed as an option to keep our kids in school when possible and avoid the 14-day quarantine. As quickly as we signed up, the goalposts moved and we were no longer allowed to utilize that option for a litany of reasons made hazily clear to us parents. We've asked for data on the quarantine stats, seeking to understand just how many children who are quarantined actually end testing positive for COVID-19, we've been told: "we don't track that data." Meanwhile, countless children have endured 14-day quarantines receiving little, if any instruction, but rather a non-interactive "window into the classroom." The children continue to get the short end of the stick in all of the decision-making. We've heard anecdotal comments from teachers that it's the "hardest year they've ever had" due to the huge learning loss their students are experiencing. Covid remains a low risk to children, but the mounting mental health crisis among our youth is growing by the day- any pediatrician will echo those sentiments.

I implore the District to think about their biggest stakeholder- the children- and insist on a test-to-stay policy for District 97 (the one we were promised). ISBE and IDPH allow a strategy for close contacts to remain in school following exposure to COVID-19 through a Test to Stay protocol, as has been documented by the CDC.” (source: <https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/school-guidance.html>).

The District must work with the Oak Park Health Department to maximize the time children spend in school. While The Oak Park Department of Health has expressed concern about a Test-to-Stay policy until there is published data, published data does exist (The Lancet demonstrated that a Test-to-Stay policy was no less safe than self-isolation (source: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)01908-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)01908-5/fulltext)). Additionally, the CDC has published results from Utah showing how many hours of classroom instruction were saved with a Test-to-Stay policy in certain schools with no increase in the rate of positive tests (source: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7021e2.htm>).

It is the District's role to fight for our children, work with the OPHD to enact what is the least restrictive means of controlling transmission while ensuring all students have access to in-person learning, continued learning loss is minimized and mental health is kept top-of-mind.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Newhart

*Board Member notes protocols for public comment based on request for the Board to publicly answer questions raised by comments submitted in Open Session. The Board, further mentions that questions sent to the Board are answered by either the Board or its designee. In open session, comments are read as received.

ACTION ITEMS

4.1 APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

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

- 4.1.1 Bill List
- 4.1.2 Personnel
- 4.1.3 Approval of Minutes from October 12, 2021 Board Meeting
- 4.1.4 Approval of Memorandum of Understanding – SEIU COVID-19 Sick Bank

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

4.2 Action Items

4.2.1 Approve or Rescind Student Suspension
(action tabled for further discussion)

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

4.2.2 Approval of Data Analytics & Research Position

Kearney moved, seconded by Hurd Johnson that the Board of Education of Oak Park School District 97, approves the position of Director of Data Analytics & Research as presented during the October 12, 2021 board meeting.

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

5. SPECIAL REPORTS

SPECIAL REPORTS

5.1 School Update

Good News

According to the latest status report from the Village of Oak Park, the weekly case totals are declining. For the fourth week in a row, our community transmission rate is "substantial," down from "high" in August and September. The number of positive students and staff is declining.

Family-teacher conferences

Thank you to all of our families and staff who met last Thursday and Friday.

Vaccine Update — Kids Ages 5-11

Pfizer has officially requested approval of its COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. A ruling is expected by early November. District 97 is working with the Oak Park Department of Public Health to plan vaccine clinics for our students. Here’s what we know:

- Only a few physicians in Oak Park will be administering vaccines in their offices.
- Our goal is to have as many students as possible fully vaccinated by the end of 2021, which would significantly impact our operations.

Also, a survey was sent to families on Oct. 21 to assist the health department with vaccine planning.

COVID-19 Metrics Dashboard

The week of October 18, 2021, we have 7 new positive student cases. 42 students are in quarantine as of 10/22 and cumulatively since August 23, 2021 we have had 73 positive student cases, and 12 staff positive cases.

SHIELD Testing

Total samples, 3,495 with 3 positive tests. The opt-out rate is 5.2%. Both positive cases and quarantines have both declined since the last board meeting.

Important Reminders

If a parent/household member tests positive for COVID-19, all household members are considered close contacts. Unvaccinated close contacts must stay home for 14 calendar days and monitor symptoms.

Accepted Test for Symptomatic Students

Include PCR or NAAT (lab-based) tests. We do not accept home tests, physicians' notes with alternative diagnoses (per state guidance) and tests must be obtained within 48 hours.

Mitigation Updates

Changes at Brooks and Julian Middle Schools include; Spectators, after consulting with staff and principals, reviewing safety mitigations and considering student needs, we are allowing spectators at the following events:

- Indoor athletic games (e.g., basketball)
- BRAVO and CAST performances
- Band, orchestra and choir performances

Afterschool Activities

- Robotics, YEMBA, PING!, Friday Night Place

Requirements for spectator safety at events include:

- All spectators must be vaccinated, proof of vaccination will be required
- Masks must be worn at all times
- Social distancing to the extent possible (3feet)
- Limited capacity in gym/auditorium (2 tickets per student)

Schools will be managing ticketing, entrances and exits.

Next Steps include working with the health department to review vaccine survey responses, confirming and communicating vaccine clinic details and continuing to track community transmission and internal metrics.

6. BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

FORC meets November 3, 2021

CLAIM meets Thursday, October 28, 2021. The committee is working to create a master schedule to have joint meetings with FORC and align with legislative dates and timelines. In terms of Board priorities, Board member proposes CLAIM, FAC and FORC hold a joint meeting.

Board Member; Who is charged with coordinating meetings for CCE Committee? We will reach out to the committee secretary for more information. Board Member mentions, this committee use to meet regularly prior to the pandemic. Understanding the importance of this committee, the Board will look into reestablishing this meeting on a more consistent basis.

Collaboration (CEC) met last week. They have seen the amount of prescreen early childhood registrations almost triple. They are also noticing issues and a decline in childcare availability. The governing board is working with the Collaboration on ways to address this, the Collaboration (CEC) is also looking to build capacity by expanding through grant writing.

OPEF Committee Council met recently, Faith Cole provided a presentation on student social emotional supports and response during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were discussions on how to make students aware of mental health services and additional support trends.

PTOC met on October 25, they were given mitigation updates, Superintendent Search updates, and in addition was introduced to the new board member, Shyla Kinhal. This group also discussed information from DivCo as they are looking to create an equity checklist that allows for consistent considerations. Boardmember noted this was a great meeting with a lot of information coming from our PTO's.

7. CONCLUDING ITEMS

7.1 BOARD REMARKS

Board member mentions upcoming event "trunk or treat" located in the parking lot of Ridgeland Commons on Friday October 29. This event would be a good way for the Board to be visible in the community. The event starts at 5pm. Board will provide availability for support at the event, more information and details will be emailed to each of the Board members.

7.1.1 IASB Delegate Assembly Discussion (continued from 10/12/2021)

Board members will each fill out the IASB Delegate vote tally sheets, provide their responses to Vice President Hurd Johnson who is the voting delegate for D97. Once received, responses will be compiled and presented at the November, 16 board meeting.

Board members also provided feedback on additional resolutions ahead of submitting their vote. Discussion further continued around literacy and education. Curriculum materials and historical data, implications and advancements around literacy in schools.

7.2 AGENDA MAINTENANCE

The draft agenda for the November 16, 2021 meeting was reviewed. Board President would like IASB discussion added again to this agenda for further discussion.

8. ADJOURNMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Kearney moved, seconded by Hurd Johnson that the meeting be adjourned. There being no further business to conduct, President Kim declared the meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary