

NEW PRAIRIE UNITED SCHOOL CORPORATION
New Prairie High School Auditorium
5333 N Cougar Road
New Carlisle, IN 46552

NOTES

“Let’s Talk Session”
Winter Extra-Curricular Activities and COVID 19 Metric Discussion

November 16, 2020

A “Let’s talk Session” was held on Monday, November 16, 2020, with Phil King, Al Williamson, Dale Groves, Rich Shail and Jason DeMeyer present. Dr. Paul White was also present.

- Mr. King opened the “Let’s Talk Session” stating the topic of this session is to specifically discuss the winter extra-curricular activities and the COVID 19 metric only.
- Mr. Michael Ekovich stated that his son is a senior basketball player who needs his final season as a NPHS basketball player. He feels that the boys, especially the seniors, need and deserve their final season. Mr. Ekovich urgently requested that if we stay orange or go red, let the boys continue to play and stream the games live without spectators so the boys can have their season as he understands that COVID is not going away anytime soon. He continued that he hates for the boys to have any regrets.
- Mrs. Linnea Robbins Winters asked that the Board reconsider their decision to postpone sports and extra-curriculars if the county goes red. She stated she is a business owner who continues to safely see patients by being diligent about wearing masks and social distancing. Her business is not making changes to their procedures based on COVID color in the county. The school has done the same by implementing the same good measures for safety. Every decision should be made based on science and data and not emotion. Data supports the thought that students are not contracting COVID in school but outside of school. The school has done a great job with the measures in place making school a safe place. One would argue students are safer in school than outside school. With lack of structure and activities for kids the outcome can become worse than if they contract the virus. She feels strongly that students should be able to participate by taking the precautions put into place. We have to learn to live with this virus and do it safely and continue to live our lives with some type of normalcy. Decisions should not be based on emotion but on data and science. Mrs. Winters concluded but asking that the Board please reconsider their decision to cancel/postpone winter sports if the county goes red.
- Mr. Mark McBride stated his disappointment for his children and their peers upon hearing that ECA’s would be cancelled if the county went to red. Students have stayed the course with their studies and their work outs on their own as they have been motivated to work hard and stay safe so they have a 2020-2021 season. Please consider other possibilities before taking away the ECA’s. This past Fall every sport was adjusted because of the virus. He offered ideas if going red: limit or no fans in attendance; consider increasing time between contests; Varsity only contests to allow seniors to have as much of a season as possible. Athlete depression is a big worry for parents.
- Jaden Winters, sophomore student, emotionally stated that when a student is injured they don’t cancel sports, they keep going. When someone gets COVID they take 2 weeks off and keep going. It is taking the “why” away from the kids. ECAs are the “why” for many of the kids. Please don’t take the “why” away from kids.

- Mr. Jason Flagg said that he appreciates all the work that the Board has done. He stated he has never questioned the decisions of the Board as they are a tremendous support of athletics. He stated that the IHSAA is the proper body to look to for direction. He feels the issues with COVID are well known at this point and feels that it is the individual family choice whether to participate in extra curricular activities. He feels that options should be offered if IHSAA allows sports to occur.
- Mr. Shail asked Mr. Bachmann how easy it is to obtain officials for games and has IHSAA offered guidance.
- Mr. Bachmann stated that there has been a surplus of officials so it has not been a problem. Regarding the IHSAA, they have offered no guidance and plan to continue winter sports from their level. They are leaving decisions up to the individual districts.
- Mr. Groves offered that he disagrees with what he has heard this evening. He has two students in the corporation that love their sports and it kills him to have to have a meeting like this. Mr. Groves asked the audience at what percent positivity do we postpone extra curriculars? He added that he admits that the decision could be wrong as there are consequences either way.
- Mr. McBride fears that if we go red and we continue to stay red through February that would be to hard to start up again.
- Mrs. Winters said that we have to look at our school and our positivity rate. If the COVID rates rise with a team then pull back a little. She went on to state that overall we have healthy kids. There is more of a percentage of risk of injury than contacting the virus. Parents and athletes should make the decision on taking that risk. If IHSAA says we have to suspend things then so be it. We should listen to them.
- Mr. King asked Mr. Bachmann that if we go red what is the rule regarding getting back into the game?
- Mr. Bachmann stated that if we miss 10 or more practices then the students have to make up 6 practices, less than 5 practices have to make up 4 practices for conditioning.
- Mr. Platz feels that percentages should be broke down by demographics.
- Mr. Flagg asked to keep protocols in place and keep playing.
- Mr. King reported that he has received emails going both ways with this issue. We consider all sides in our decisions.
- Mr. McBride stated that back in August when we were deciding which model to follow, some surrounding school corporations gave their students a choice of hybrid schedule or virtual learning with coaches encouraging their athletes to go 100% virtual, keeping the kids circle small, and continue to participate in their ECA. He added that this could be a win, win for NP with our students doing their virtual learning at home and participating in athletics, keeping their circle small.
- Mr. Platz asked if the numbers are rising at the schools?
- Dr. White stated that currently the high school has 11 positive cases among students, of the 11 positive cases, only on one (1) situation is traced to in-school contact, the other 10 contracted outside of school. There are over 40 students currently quarantined with an even mix of outside or inside school possible exposures. At the middle school, there are 5 positive cases, 52 students are quarantined with 30 of those outside of school possible contact. At the elementary schools, there is 1 positive student with quarantined students in the teens. 10 staff members are quarantined at the moment with 2 positive results.
- Mr. Flagg asked what the main concern is from the Board's perspective regarding student athletes?
- Mr. Groves stated that he is very concerned on multiple levels. He completely understands the mental health worry of student athletes which does concern him. He is concerned about general student safety.

- Mr. Flagg stated that anyone can contract the virus anywhere. He then asked if there was a way to reduce the risk without eliminating ECAs. There are currently protocols in place for safety to students' which coaches and students follow.
- Mr. Groves stated that he is a realist. He stated that he has attended several games, seeing that coaches are not wearing masks at times. We need to do a much better job with our coaches following protocols because if a coach won't wear the mask then the athletes won't either. It is a big reason we are having this conversation today.
- Mr. Ekovich asked if this is a liability issue? Is there a waiver parents and athletes can sign?
- Dr. White stated that the corporation attorney recommendation that the waiver is not a necessary step because it is already inherently the case that the participant assumes the risk.
- Mr. King mentioned that he attended a game last week noting that student athletes did a great job social distancing and wearing masks, however, some NP parents and fans were not social distanced. They were all grouped together. He observed that they were either not wearing masks or they were below their noses. He observed Mr. Stone asking fans to social distance which some did not.
- Mr. McBride asked about assigned seating?
- Mr. Shail answered that you cannot police the fans.
- Mr. McBride stated he would be willing to stay home and watch the contest virtually so his kids can play their season.
- Mr. Flagg asked if there is a way to control fans. If there is not then can we eliminate the fans and broadcast the games.
- Mr. Platz added that he feels that ECA's can be done safely.
- Mr. McBride stated that he appreciates the Board's transparency and that the public is given the opportunity to voice their opinions. He also appreciates the communications that go out to the staff and community.
- Mr. King stated that the Board appreciates everyone that came out this evening. The Board keeps everyone in mind when making decisions and will consider the input tonight. He added that the Board appreciates the civility from everyone tonight and the student athletes that spoke as well. What the athletes had to say does matter.