

BOARD NOTES

August 4, 2021

A special meeting of the School Board was held Wednesday, August 4, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. in the New Prairie United School Corporation Central Office Board Room with Mr. Phil King, Mr. Dale Groves, Mr. Al Williamson, Jason DeMeyer and Mrs. Jill Smith present. Dr. Paul White, Superintendent, was also present.

Mr. Phil King, Board President, reviewed guidelines for speaking on agenda items.

There was a motion by Mr. Groves to amend the agenda, adding Action item "B" to approve the New Prairie Middle Assistant Principal, seconded by Mr. Williamson and approved 5-0.

ACTION ITEMS

- (A) The Board approved the revision of Back to School COVID 19 Protocols for the 2021-22 School Year. The revision includes quarantining unvaccinated close contacts of COVID positive individuals and vaccinated individuals if showing symptoms, per Governor Holcomb's Executive Order and Indiana Dept of Health Guidance, until the Governor's Executive Order expires. The NPUSC School Board reserves the right to make changes to this plan as necessary for the betterment of students and staff.

- Before the Board vote, Mr. King read the following letter to be sent out to NPUSC families and staff:

Dear NPUSC Families and Staff,

As you are aware, the New Prairie United School Corporation Board of School Trustees met on Wednesday, July 14, 2021, to review the latest guidance sent to us from the Indiana State Department of Health and LaPorte County Health Department and to formulate our Return To School Plan for the 2021-2022 school year. That guidance included clear language that it was **recommended** individuals "should" quarantine if found to be in close contact, not required. Further, it was clearly stated in the Guidance that final decisions on COVID Return to School plans were up to individual school boards to determine locally.

As a result of the guidance at that time, one of the major themes of the 21-22 Return To School Plan was

- *Confirmed COVID positive students/staff will be quarantined per the latest Health Department Guidance. Those found to be in close contact, however, will not be required to quarantine at NPUSC, but their families will be notified. Families with close contact students will have the option to continue attending school daily or stay home while monitoring symptoms.*

On Thursday, July 29, 2021, Governor Holcomb signed Executive Order 21-19 which mandates isolation of those who test positive for COVID-19 and quarantining of close contacts, whether you are vaccinated or unvaccinated.

It is the belief of the New Prairie United School Corporation Board of School Trustees that this is overreach by the State of Indiana, State Department of Health and the LaPorte County Health Department. Per Governor Holcomb on May 28, 2021, **local school boards will be responsible for implementing measures and restrictions deemed necessary and prudent to address the impact and spread of COVID-19 for their buildings.** We believe that students should have every opportunity to have as much in person learning as possible and that this mandate by the State of Indiana, Indiana State Department of Health and LaPorte County Health Department is in direct opposition to that.

Therefore, at this time, due the Executive Order signed by Governor Holcomb, the New Prairie United School Corporation Board of School Trustees has had to revise the Return To School Plan for 2021-22 school year regarding close contacts to read as follows

- **Confirmed COVID positive students/staff** will be **isolated** for at least ten (10) days following onset of symptoms or a positive test result. Individuals may return on day eleven (11) as long as symptoms are improving, and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications
- **Unvaccinated students/staff who are deemed in close contact with a COVID positive individual must**

quarantine. Vaccinated individuals who either show proof of vaccination and/or are the State database as being vaccinated do not quarantine UNLESS they show COVM symptoms after being in close contact with COVID positive individuals

- o Asymptomatic close contact may return on day eleven(11) wearing a mask on days 11-14
- o Asymptomatic close contact may return on day eight (8) with negative PCR on day five(5), six (6) or seven (7) wearing a mask on days 8-14
- o Asymptomatic close contact may return on day fifteen (15) to all prior activities without a mask.

The New Prairie United School Corporation Board of School Trustees realizes how frustrating this change is. The newly updated Executive Order is in effect from Midnight on Sunday, August 1, 2021 until 11:59 PM on August 31, 2021. At this time, it is our intention to return to our original Back To School Plan once this Executive Order has expired unless Governor Holcomb extends the Executive Order, mandates we make other changes or if conditions change and we, the New Prairie United School Corporation Board of School Trustees, feel the need to make changes for the betterment of our students and staff. We will be in contact with our local legislators as well to be sure they know where we stand regarding this change in direction. At this time, we will continue to follow the rest of our Back To School Plan including **Optional Facial Coverings (Masks) for all K-12 Students and Staff**.

The full Back To School Plan can be found at

<https://www.npusc.k12.in.us/npusc-back-to-school-plan/>

To view Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 21-19, go to

<https://www.in.gov/gov/files/executive-order-21-19-continuation-of-health-based-provisions.pdf>

Best Regards,

The New Prairie United School Corporation Board of School Trustees & Superintendent of Schools

- Mr. King then took comments from the community:
- Mr. Yacullo stated that he feels it is odd to treat vaccinated and unvaccinated people differently. Mr. Yacullo then asked if there will be social distancing in the cafeterias at lunch. Dr. White responded that we will not be starting the school year that way. Social distancing at lunch is one of many mitigation steps that would be enacted if a school reached or was approaching 5% positive cases.
- Mr. Pietrzak stated that he appreciates the Board remaining flexible.
- Mr. Fronk said that he appreciates the Board's efforts at keeping things as normal as possible for students. He went on to state that he feels treating students who are vaccinated and unvaccinated differently is the correct thing to do. Mr. Fronk concluded by stating that he supports the Board and their decisions.

(B) The Board approved Mr. Kristopher Staats as the New Prairie Middle School Assistant Principal on a two-year contract

REPORTS

(A) Superintendent's Report:

- Dr. White read a press release on Mr. Staats listing his credentials and his depth of experience. Dr. White invited Mr. Staats to speak.
- Mr. Staats thanked Dr. White, the Board, and Mr. Holmquest for this opportunity. Mr. Staats briefly explained his experience at LaPorte High School as an Assistant Principal. Mr. Staats stated that he is thrilled to have the opportunity to work with Mr. Holmquest here at New Prairie.
- Dr. White concluded saying that we are fortunate to employ someone with Mr. Staats experience and is looking forward to working with him.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Groves made the motion to adjourn at 4:48 p.m.