

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 25, 2022  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

January 25, 2022

**1. Opening Items**

**1.01 CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees was called to order at 2:00 p.m. in the Board Room of the Central Administration Building, located at 425 East Ninth Street in Reno, Nevada.

**1.02 ROLL CALL**

President Angela Taylor and Board Members Jeff Church, Adam Mayberry, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, Joe Rodriguez, and Beth Smith were present. Superintendent Kristen McNeill and staff were also present. Student Representative Victoria Gomez was not present at the time of roll call.

**1.03 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Kristin Oh, *Reno Gazette Journal*, led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Consent Agenda Items**

Trustee Church requested Consent Agenda Item 2.12, Approval of the agreement with The Children’s Cabinet to implement Signs of Suicide Program at all Washoe County School District middle schools for \$249,000, be pulled for additional discussion.

It was moved by Trustee Smith and seconded by Trustee Rodriguez that **the Board of Trustees approves Consent Agenda Items 2.02 through 2.11 and 2.13**. The result of the vote was Unanimous: (Yea: Jeff Church, Adam Mayberry, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, Joe Rodriguez, Beth Smith, and Angela Taylor.) Final Resolution: Motion Carries.

2.02 The Board of Trustees approved the minutes of the July 6, 2021 Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

2.03 The Board of Trustees approved the minutes of the July 26, 2021 Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees.

- 2.04 The Board of Trustees approved the minutes of the October 12, 2021 Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees.
- 2.05 The Board of Trustees approved the minutes of the November 9, 2021 Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees.
- 2.06 The Board of Trustees approved the 2nd quarter Fiscal Year 2021-22 average daily attendance and pupil-teacher ratios for grades K-3 report to be filed with the Nevada Department of Education.
- 2.07 The Board of Trustees accepted the "Budget Transfer Report" and provided authorization to include budget transfers between functions or programs for a total amount of \$107,308 for the period January 1, 2022, through January 12, 2022, which includes the transfer of \$60,000 from the District's General Fund Contingency account to Board of Trustees Annual Fees & Services budget for the superintendent search, and approved the transfer of \$35,000 from the District's General Fund Contingency account to the Board of Trustees Annual Fees & Services budget for outside legal counsel for the Board of Trustees, as required by Nevada Revised Statute 354.598005.
- 2.08 The Board of Trustees awarded Bid #22-41-B-12-AA, Toilet Paper and Soap Dispenser Retrofits at Eight (8) Washoe County School District Schools, to Gary Romero, Inc. for \$332,300.
- 2.09 The Board of Trustees approved the purchase of cafeteria tables in the estimated total amount of \$674,460 from School Specialty through a Joinder Contract, OMNIA R191815.
- 2.10 The Board of Trustees awarded Bid #22-37-B-12-DA, Emergency Responder Radio Upgrades at 5 Washoe County School District Schools, to Nelson Electric Co., Inc. for \$805,000.
- 2.11 The Board of Trustees approved an increase in contract amount for Request for Bid (RFB) 054-04-02-18, Certain Plumbing Repairs, for the current term of the contract ending April 30, 2022, in the estimated additional amount of \$100,000 for a revised contract amount of \$175,000.
- 2.13 The Board of Trustees approved the appointment of Rhonda Lawrence as an At-Large Representative on the Safe and Healthy Schools Commission (SHSC) for the term ending June 30, 2023.

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**2.12 APPROVAL OF THE AGREEMENT WITH THE CHILDREN'S CABINET TO IMPLEMENT SIGNS OF SUICIDE PROGRAM AT ALL WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT MIDDLE SCHOOLS FOR \$249,000**

Trustee Church requested an overview of the program and how the District ensured any data collected on students was protected. Katherine Loudon, Counseling Coordinator, provided information on the Signs of Suicide program, which the District had used in the schools for 8 years. School counselors and social workers provided the programming in the schools, which required active parent permission. Parents were also offered an opportunity to have a mental screening conducted for adolescent depression through The Children's Cabinet. The Children's Cabinet was a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) compliant organization and any student information collected related to the Signs of Suicide program was not stored in Infinite Campus. The provider of Signs of Suicide, Mindwise, did not store data and only sold the licenses for the program.

President Taylor opened the meeting to public comment.

John Eppolito, Protect Nevada Children, thanked staff for the information. He expressed concern over where the data on the children was being stored and if it was actually private. He was also concerned about how the District collected active parent permission for programs because he believed the parents did not read the information or know what they were signing their children up for during the registration process. He wondered if teachers were trained on the program because the website indicated they did not need to be.

Margaret Martini agreed with Mr. Eppolito regarding the training of teachers on the program because she did not believe teachers were qualified to identify mental health challenges in students. She requested information on where the parental opt-in permission forms were stored since she felt the District had not been honest in the past about opting into programs or opting out. She did not feel The Children's Cabinet was qualified to store any data on the children.

Shannon Coley requested additional information on what the \$249,000 would be spent on.

President Taylor requested additional information on the training provided by The Children's Cabinet. Ms. Loudon stated the Signs of Suicide program was largely conducted by the school counselors and social workers for the prevention portion of the program. The additional screenings parents could choose to have their children participate in were conducted by licensed clinicians. The partnership with The Children's Cabinet was needed because they were able to provide the licensed clinicians.

Trustee Rodriguez asked what the funding would be used for. Ms. Loudon mentioned the funding was for the licensed clinicians. The reason the program took multiple days in the schools was because more and more parents were opting into having their children screened and participating in some of follow-up visits.

Trustee Church wondered if teachers were trained in spotting concerns and then making referrals to mental health professionals. Ms. Loudon indicated all teachers, across all grade levels were trained in suicide prevention per Board Policy.

It was moved by Trustee Church and seconded by Trustee Rodriguez that **the Board of Trustees approves the agreement with The Children's Cabinet to implement Signs of Suicide Program at all Washoe County School District middle schools for \$249,000.** The result of the vote was Unanimous: (Yea: Jeff Church, Adam Mayberry, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, Joe Rodriguez, Beth Smith, and Angela Taylor.) Final Resolution: Motion Carries.

### **3. Items for Presentation, Discussion, Information and/or Action**

#### **3.01 APPROVAL OF THE PLAN TO SPEND THE FINAL ONE-THIRD OF THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND (ESSER) III ALLOCATION TO WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR \$25,798,620**

Staff presented an overview of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) I, II, and III grants funding, including a review of key data, where the funds were being spent, proposed programming for remaining funds, the ESSER page on the District's website, and the monitoring and evaluation component to determine if the funds were having the expected results. Funds for ESSER I were focused on mitigation efforts related to COVID, while ESSER II and ESSER III funds were focused on recovery from the impact of COVID. The types of programming the District utilized to comply with the focus of each grant were reviewed, especially how they directly tied to Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan to improve student academic success. The total award of ESSER III funds was \$77,282,787 and the District had received 2/3 of the allocation in August and the final 1/3, \$25,798,620, was recently awarded. The funding categories and the amounts in each category related to ESSER III were highlighted. The request from the Board at the present meeting was to approve the final 1/3 of the ESSER grant, including revisions to the original allocation plan totaling close to \$11.5 million due to vacancy savings and funds not previously allocated. The recommendation was to fund programming for a Leadership Pathway, additional Building Learning Facilitators, enhanced summer school opportunities, and increased tutoring and intervention opportunities. The proposed programming was the quickest evidence- and research-based way to improve academic recovery because it would place highly skilled teachers

in front of students daily. Additionally, having a highly effective administrator in a school was also the quickest evidence- and researched-based way to develop highly skilled teachers. The goal was to be intentional and utilize researched-based programming that also allowed the District to be innovative as needed. The ESSER page on the District's website was highlighted and information on the monitoring of the programming would occur explained.

Mike Gifford, Yvonne Shaw Middle School Principal, provided information on the work of the community stakeholder panel to help identify the needs in the schools. He spoke about the site-specific supports being provided to students at Shaw Middle School and expressed appreciation for the autonomy provided to the schools to focus on their own students.

Trustee Nicolet requested additional information on how Shaw Middle School determined their needs and how it would be determined if the supports were making a positive difference. Mr. Gifford explained he worked with the school leadership team, then the entire school staff, and finally the parents and school community. Assessment scores, attendance rates, and pass/fail rates were reviewed to determine the most appropriate supports needed for the individual students.

President Taylor expressed her appreciation for the targeted approach and the work with community stakeholders, including the Reno/Sparks Indian Colony.

Emily Ellison, Chief Human Resources Officer, presented additional information on the Leadership Pathway Program. The intent of the program was to address both short-term and long-term needs in the District, especially at the elementary school level, for high quality leaders. She reminded the Trustees the District would see an increased level of principal retirement and attrition rates over the next 3 years.

Trustee Church expressed concern over the amount of funding proposed for the Leadership Pathway and the Building Learning Facilitators. He did not understand why the District was recommending over \$6.5 million for the programming. Ms. Ellison explained the Building Learning Facilitators were focused on improving teaching, instruction, and building the capacity of classroom teachers through mentoring and developmental supports. The Leadership Pathway Program was intended to increase the number of highly effective administrators in the District to address the anticipated need for new administrators over the next few years. Joe Ernst, Chief Accountability Officer, added the District was looking at filling about 20 administrative positions in the next year alone and then close to 50 positions in the coming years. The pathway to becoming an administrator was long and required multiple steps along the way.

Superintendent McNeill requested additional information on the Building Learning Facilitators and the work they did in the classrooms. Mr. Ernst mentioned the proposed

budget revision would allow the positions to remain in the schools for the 2022-23 School Year. The Building Learning Facilitators not only worked with the individual teachers to build capacity, but they also worked directly with students who required additional supports.

Trustee Church remarked that he was still not convinced the District was spending the money appropriately. He was concerned the Board was not directing how the money was being spent and he could not support the current recommendation because he did not believe it was tied directly to student success.

Trustee Smith indicated she had been able to sit with a Building Learning Facilitator at Veterans' Memorial Elementary School to talk about their work. She learned there was a direct line between the positions and the quality of education in the schools through their work with the teachers and with individual students.

Trustee Nicolet noted one of the things teachers continued to request from her as a Trustee was time and that they needed more time to not only work with their students but work on their lesson plans and that having the additional positions in the buildings provided some of that time for the teachers. She agreed with the creation of the leadership pipeline because administrators did not become administrators overnight and needed an avenue to learn and grow.

Trustee Mayberry wondered what would happen to the programming when the funds were depleted. Mr. Ernst remarked that it would be dependent on the priorities of the Board and District. For some of the programs, the costs should decrease as the need for intensive programming decreased, such as enhanced summer school. Other programs were in line with Nevada Department of Education (NDE) requirements, so the hope was that, while the programs would still be needed, the level of funding would not be as great so the District would be able to budget for them, if the programs were effective based on analysis.

President Taylor commended the District for acknowledging there were areas the District did not do well in throughout the course of the pandemic and the desire to have an intensive focus on certain staffing positions that directly supported and improved education for students. She emphasized that the single most important aspect for student outcomes was a highly qualified teacher and the single most important thing that produced highly qualified teachers was a highly qualified administrator.

Trustee Church remarked he did not have a concern with the \$57.7 million allocated for student learning; however, he did have issues related to allocating funds towards teacher support, student well-being, and other supports. He was directly concerned about the \$2.1 million tied to teacher support and the hiring of additional trainers, mental health supports, and specifically another Equity and Diversity Trainer. He would

like to see that position removed because that was where he heard a lot of complaints from conservative voters in the community and he did not believe there was a need for another trainer.

President Taylor mentioned that portion of the ESSER funding related to the Equity and Diversity Trainer had previously been approved by the Board.

Trustee Church believed that was part of the problem with the agenda item because he was unsure what the Board was supposed to be approving at the current meeting. He remarked that Nevada and the Washoe County School District were consistently last or almost last in the nation and were essentially the worst of the worst based on ACT scores and the star rankings. He would prefer money be spent on drug testing because over 50% of staff believed there was a drug problem in the schools and there was over a 30% chronic absentee rate the District needed to address. He felt the teachers had the education and training they needed already and would like to see other issues addressed with the one-time funds.

Trustee Minetto stated, as a former teacher, the Leadership Pathway and Building Learning Facilitators were directly intertwined with providing better educational opportunities to students. If teachers were not properly trained in the curriculum, they could not provide the appropriate instruction to the students and if the administrators were not properly trained, they could not provide the appropriate leadership to their schools. The proposed programs were the evidence- and research-based methods the District was recommending to address the academic challenges the students were facing.

Student Representative Gomez noted the students appreciated the additional supports and personalized instruction they had been receiving. The students knew the teachers were working harder to find the connections with students and get them towards graduation. The long-term substitutes and school specific substitutes were helpful because they allowed the students to see the same people in the classrooms and buildings, which increased the connections between the school and the students.

Trustee Smith stated she did not believe the Washoe County School District was the worst of the worst and had seen the great things happening in the classrooms with teachers and students. She was proud to be a Trustee for the Washoe County School District.

Trustee Nicolet reminded the Trustees that staff developed recommendations based on the policies and priorities set forth by the Board through the Strategic Plan. Staff brought forth programs that were evidence- and research-based to improve student learning and success. While the individual Trustees might have specific ideas they were

interested in seeing funded, it was important to know where those ideas fell into policies and priorities.

President Taylor opened the meeting to public comment.

Roger Edwards agreed with Trustee Church that the Board should use the funds for the Leadership Pathway for tutoring or summer school. He believed the District was not focusing on getting student success right the first time and instead looking for "recovery."

James Benthin requested actual numbers on what the District wanted to see improved upon when making decisions, instead of just saying they wanted to see improvement in student learning. He felt the academic recovery should not only be for the pandemic but should have been occurring for over 5 years. He would like to see the ESSER funds spent on points spelled out by the Republican Women's Club in their candidate pledge.

Mike Croghan mentioned he would be interested in seeing a peer tutoring program created in the District. He believed such a program would not only help students academically but would also help with mental health concerns because students would be more willing to speak with their peers than with mental health professionals. He remarked that there was nothing more impactful for a 7<sup>th</sup> grader than having an 11<sup>th</sup> grader come in and help them with their work.

John Eppolito agreed that it was critical to have highly effective teachers and administrators in the schools and he would be interested in seeing all the ESSER funds utilized for those purposes because everything else was "fluff." He expressed his concern with the amount of time students spent on screens.

Shannon Coley mentioned she had spoken with many teachers who said the Building Learning Facilitators did not work directly with students and only worked with data. She did not believe Equity and Diversity Trainers supported teachers and that it would be more impactful to have aides in each classroom. She agreed with the leadership pipeline because that would positively impact students.

Margaret Martini commented that the Board continued to throw more and more money at the District but there were never any positive results shown and the District continued to be dead last in the rankings. She wondered if there was any accountability for the Superintendent and the Board. She stated it was more important to see academic results than spend money on "stupid social programs."

Mike Gifford remarked the information provided in the presentation showed the greatest impact to improve student performance was having a highly effective teacher and for teachers the greatest impact was a highly effective administrator. He believed the



additional funds would be going to areas that research showed directly mattered to improving student performance. He reminded the Trustees they were elected to be champions of and for the District and urged them to act accordingly because there were a lot of great things happening in the schools. While he believed it was fine to address challenges and call out areas in need of improvement, it was important to remember test scores did not define students.

The Board received emails from the following:

Mindy Lilyquist

Riley Gillis

It was moved by Trustee Rodriguez and seconded by Trustee Nicolet that **the Board of Trustees approves the plan to spend the final one-third of the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III) in the amount of \$25,798,620.**

President Taylor opened the motion for discussion.

Trustee Nicolet expressed her appreciation to the stakeholder community group for the time and commitment they had made to the District.

Trustee Mayberry thanked staff for the presentation and the transparency of the website.

Trustee Church stated he was frustrated over the motion because he did not believe the Board was voting on \$25 million, but \$11 million. He indicated the comments from the community spoke to his concerns regarding the quality of education. He felt the data showed the District's numbers were below those of the state and if the District was in denial of the data then they could not improve.

The result of the vote was 6-1: (Yea: Adam Mayberry, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, Joe Rodriguez, Beth Smith, and Angela Taylor. Nay: Jeff Church.) Final Resolution: Motion Carries.

*President Taylor recessed the meeting for 20 minutes.*

### **3.02 INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION TO UPDATE THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ON MENTAL WELLNESS SUPPORTS INCLUDING THE USE OF, AND POTENTIAL USE OF, TELEHEALTH IN THE DELIVERY OF MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS IN THE WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Staff provided an overview of Telehealth as a service delivery model, including expected outcomes and possible implications if the District implemented a Telehealth model. As part of the presentation, a list of potential services and co-located service models was reviewed. Information on past Telehealth pilot programs was included. The programs were fairly successful, and families were highly receptive; however, the programs ended for different reasons, including hesitancy of use prior to the pandemic. Having Telehealth co-located within the schools provide additional access for many students and families, especially in terms of mental health services. The possible next steps would be to issue a Request for Proposal to solicit interest in developing a new pilot program with a single high school vertical. If the pilot program was successful, the program would then be expanded to other verticals until all schools were covered.

President Taylor requested additional information on who would have access to the student data. Dr. Paul LaMarca, Chief Strategies Officer, indicated the District would need to conduct some additional research on the impacts to IT and allowing an outside vendor to have access to the District's network, as well as ensuring educational and medical privacy were upheld. In terms of medical information, the only information the District would store would be parental permission and appointment dates and times.

President Taylor wondered if the District would be responsible for billing either Medicaid or private insurance. Dr. LaMarca explained the intent would be to have the individual provider conduct the billing process because the District did not have the infrastructure in place to conduct billing.

Trustee Smith thanked staff for the information, including the possible implications because it was important to remember there were other considerations the District had to take into account. She asked if staff had spoken with some of the other school districts in Nevada regarding their experiences with Telehealth. Dr. LaMarca mentioned they were having conversations with some of the school districts, including Churchill County School District.

Trustee Mayberry appreciated the information and indicated he would be interested in learning more; however, he expressed some concern over having a sick student at school so they could participate in a Telehealth doctor's appointment. Dr. LaMarca noted some school districts had restricted access to some Telehealth services because of the challenges in having a sick student at school. The District did have a self-screener that was used related to COVID that could be used by clinical aides to determine if the student should even be at school. Additionally, there were other appointments that could be scheduled ahead of time, such as a routine eye exam.

Trustee Rodriguez felt the Telehealth model would be ideal for the rural schools in the District, such as Gerlach or Natchez. He wondered why the District needed to conduct an additional pilot program if there had already been pilot programs conducted. Dr.

LaMarca provided additional information on the former pilot programs and the length of the programs. In terms of the pilot program with Renown, Renown had determined the model they were utilizing was not sustainable; however, the Hazel pilot program was lauded by staff, but it only lasted a couple of months.

Trustee Minetto asked when a new pilot program could begin if that was the desire of the Board. Superintendent McNeill explained the District still had a lot of questions to be answered before staff would be prepared to move forward with issuing a Request for Proposal or Request for Information. She recommended the Trustees wait until a new superintendent was onboard since that individual may have experience with Telehealth and how it should be implemented.

Student Representative Gomez felt a Telehealth program would be extremely beneficial to students once the District was able to implement the program in multiple schools. She indicated if the program were only in one or two verticals, students might not know about the program and how to access services.

Trustee Nicolet wondered if there would be a cabinet with medication and what the responsibility of staff would be related to the dispensing of medications. Jennifer Crane, Director of Health Services, explained the District would only be able to keep over-the-counter medications and anything would need to have a doctor's prescription or order to provide anything to a student, so a parent would not be able to call and request their child be provided an aspirin for a headache. Parents were generally included on the Telehealth calls so they would be able to provide permission at that time if medication was recommended.

President Taylor mentioned she would be interested in learning more about a Telehealth program in the schools, especially since during the pandemic Telehealth had become a more popular option. She cautioned that it would be important to ensure staff had the time to work on developing a Request for Information or Request for Proposal because there was a lot already going on for staff. Dr. LaMarca indicated staff could begin working with the Purchasing Department on the creation of a Request for Information, as well as working with other school districts on determining best practices in terms of Telehealth strategies and programs.

### **3.03 PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO PROVIDE DIRECTION TO THE SUPERINTENDENT ON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION PLANS FOR THE CLASS OF 2022**

A presentation was provided on the graduation plans for the Class of 2022. The District was recommending moving graduation ceremonies back to a single location, Lawlor Events Center, and continue the individual school traditions that occurred prior to COVID-19. While the schools had conducted successful graduation ceremonies over the

past 2 years, it was clear the ceremonies were not equitable for all schools since many schools were not able to hold graduations on their own campuses. Additional information on safety considerations, inclement weather, and staffing considerations was provided. It was noted that since the venue was larger than the schools, the families would be provided with more tickets per student and the events would be live streamed so family and friends would be able to watch the ceremonies no matter their location. The proposed graduation schedule was presented.

President Taylor opened the meeting to public comment.

Alexia Carver was a senior at North Valleys High School. She spoke in support of having the graduation ceremonies at a central location because she believed it would bring back the formality of the events, which had been lacking the past couple of years.

The Board received emails from the following:

Rachelle Davis	Annan Baumann
Jaime Winchell	Julie Fontani
Daniela Bazzoli-Ferrari	Kristine Kinne
Karen Gotchy	Yvonne and Ryan Dixon
Sarah Salcedo	Annie Cates
The O'Connell Family	Happ Higashi
Anne Pauly	Amanda Miller
Lisa Lindsay	Michelle Simmons, Galena High School PTO
Lisa Hammargren-Kuykendall	Janna Rager
Stephanie Peterson	Melissa Humes
Robin Faller	Claire Sear
Donna Gasparre	Christine Anderson
Daniel La Fountain	Julie Custer
Lorie Powers	Jessica Dunn
Lori Wohletz	Raquel Abowd
Michelle Larsen	Methinee Averill
Leonard Wohletz	Kris Williams
The Childs Family	Ali Demosthens
Karen McCaskill	Jennifer Smith
Cheryl Czyz	Amy Ryan
Dawn Denton	
Kris Sullivan	

Student Representative Gomez noted the graduation recommendation was presented to the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, where it received glowing accolades because it would bring back many of the school traditions. The seniors were excited about going back to Lawlor Events Center because they would be able to have additional family members present.

Trustee Rodriguez requested information from the principals on what they were hearing from families on returning to Lawlor and the experiences during the past 2 years.

Tiffany McMaster, Academy of Arts, Careers and Technology (AACT) High School Principal, provided her experiences as a new principal with graduation during the pandemic. She noted they conducted a drive-thru graduation for the Class of 2020 and held an in-person ceremony at Damonte Ranch High School for the Class of 2021 since AACT High School did not have a field or area large enough to conduct the ceremony at the school. While they all appreciated the efforts made and assistance provided by the staff at Damonte Ranch High School, there were a variety of challenges associated with conducting the ceremony at another school. Many in her school community were excited to return to Lawlor Events Center because it would be a more formal ceremony.

Desiree Mandeville, North Valleys High School Principal, explained the challenges faced by North Valleys High School for their graduation ceremony for the Class of 2021. While they were able to conduct the ceremony on their football field, it was an extremely hot day and the only shade available was for those guests who sat on stage. The school was forced to limit the number of tickets per student to six, so there were tensions created with families bargaining with others to obtain additional tickets. She would like to see a more formal ceremony and a return to some of the prior traditions the schools were able to hold when the ceremonies were held at Lawlor Events Center. She noted there were some seniors from the Class of 2021 who were unable to attend the graduation ceremony because of the timing of the event and their commitments to post-high school activities, such as boot camp.

Leah Keuscher, Earl Wooster High School Principal, mentioned that planning for graduations at the school sites was challenging for staff because they were working with students through the last day of school to ensure they had the credits needed to graduate. Like AACT High School, Earl Wooster High School was unable to host their ceremony because of the size of their football field. Other benefits of having the ceremonies at Lawlor Events Center included the ability to plug in multiple microphones to allow for the students to perform as part of band, orchestra, and choir. She had spoken with many of her students and they were looking forward to returning to Lawlor.

Trustee Church requested information on the cost of graduations previously held at Lawlor Events Center and then the costs of holding the ceremonies at the schools. Vangie Russell, Project Manager, stated that in 2019 the total cost was about \$150,900. Lawlor was working with the District to try to ensure the cost for 2022 was comparable. The hard costs to the District for 2021 was \$110,340, which included the rental fees for restrooms, production, and printing. The District also paid \$10,000 in overtime for

school site employees. The final costs also did not take into account any additional costs incurred by the individual schools to prepare the site and maintenance of fields.

Trustee Church requested additional clarification on the costs and timing if the ceremonies were held at the schools. Staff indicated there would be additional costs to the schools and costs were continuing to increase due to supply chain issues. The District would also be competing with the Reno Rodeo for rental goods, such as chairs, tents, and stages. If the graduation ceremonies were held at the schools, the dates would need to be in the middle of June. For 2021, the ceremonies were not the same week as Reno Rodeo; however, there were staffing challenges with the vendors but the District was able to make everything work for the schools.

Trustee Church remarked that the Reno Rodeo did not begin until June 17, which was after the proposed dates for graduation. Ms. Russell explained the vendors began setting up for the Rodeo weeks in advance and would not have the labor or supplies the District would require to conduct the ceremonies at the school sites.

Trustee Church noted the emails he had received were almost 100% in favor of holding the ceremonies at the schools, especially Galena High School. While weather could be a factor, the schools did have gyms where they could move people. The people who would attend the ceremonies were all closer to the schools than Lawlor and the parking and traffic getting out of Lawlor was not good. He expressed concern over the cost and wondered if the District could shorten the time frame they would need for the facility to 2 days and then allow those schools who wanted to hold the ceremonies at their sites. Ms. Russell stated the District did not have the supplies nor labor to run two concurrent venues for the 14 graduation ceremonies. Lauren Ford, Lead Area Superintendent, added there were equity concerns if the ceremonies were held at the individual schools. While the Board may have heard from numerous families from a single school, she believed there were many more families who supported holding the event at Lawlor Events Center. Ms. Keuscher provided additional information on the outreach she conducted with her families when developing the plans for the 2021 ceremony, which included numerous meetings and walking of the campus to determine if it would be possible to hold a ceremony at Earl Wooster High School.

Student Representative Gomez mentioned there were equity concerns because not all schools were able to hold ceremonies at their sites for various reasons. If all ceremonies were conducted at Lawlor, all schools would be provided with the same opportunities, such as all seniors being provided the same number of tickets because the size of the venue was the same for everyone. The schools were able to bring in their individual traditions, so while the venue would be the same, each ceremony would be different. Students were more interested in being together for graduation and sharing the day with their families.

President Taylor asked if there was a standard time set for the length of the ceremonies. One of the concerns she had heard regarding having the ceremonies return to Lawlor Events Center was that some of the larger schools felt rushed because they had to be out by a certain time. Ms. Russell indicated she worked with the principals to adjust the times and allow for more time for the ceremonies, especially for the larger schools.

Trustee Mayberry remarked that he could understand why some families were advocating strongly to hold the ceremonies at their school sites; however, as a Trustee representing all schools and students, he could not support allowing one school to have a different ceremony. It was also important to remember weather or wildfires could be a factor.

Trustee Minetto believed the Lawlor Events Center provided a special venue for the ceremonies. While having the ceremonies at the schools was special, they were still conducted on the football fields.

Trustee Rodriguez wondered how long the ceremonies had been held at Lawlor Events Center. Ms. Russell noted the District had been conducting the ceremonies at Lawlor for decades and prior to then, the ceremonies were held at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center. She added there was one year when the District was not able to hold the ceremonies at Lawlor due to construction so the ceremonies were moved back to the Convention Center and the families demanded the District return to Lawlor the following year.

President Taylor appreciated the additional information provided by staff and the considerations and changes made. She highlighted that the schools would not really have an indoor option if there were weather concerns because the gymnasiums were not large enough to hold everyone. If there were weather challenges, such as lightening, there would be no options for the schools to move the ceremony indoors and the event would have to be cancelled. She wondered if there was an option to increase the number of tickets students would be provided. Ms. Russell indicated that number of tickets was based on the staffing needed to ensure a safe ceremony and the approved budget for graduations.

President Taylor wondered what the cost would be to open the venue to additional guests. Ms. Russell commented that the venue already allowed for additional guests and if all graduates at Spanish Springs High School used all their tickets the number of guests would be 5,600. If the District were to open the venue even more, based on the configuration, there would be people sitting behind the stage. There would also be concerns related to staffing and having the appropriate number of people available to clean the venue after each ceremony and set up for the next ceremony. The District had not previously limited the number of guests per students prior to COVID; however,

the District was beginning to have conversations regarding limiting the number of guests due to a large number of complaints in 2019 from families who had to sit behind the stage for the ceremony. Ms. Keuscher suggested having the individual school sites handle ticket distribution and check with the students to determine if they would be utilizing all their tickets. She felt that would provide a fair system for everyone and allow the schools to accommodate larger families.

Superintendent McNeill praised the efforts of District staff over the past 2 years and the work they put in to holding different types of graduation ceremonies in the middle of the pandemic. She felt the events over the past 2 years were wonderful and special in their own ways and that moving the ceremonies back to Lawlor Events Center would also be wonderful and special. She knew the individual schools would add their own traditions and each ceremony would be different and specific to the individual school and graduating class.

Trustee Church indicated that he could support the move but stressed he would need some response from Communications he could provide to those in his district because they would be unhappy with him for supporting holding graduations at Lawlor Events Center.

Trustee Rodriguez remarked that it would be important to have a message for all Trustees to provide to families and the community on why the Board approved the recommendation and not just for one Trustee or area.

It was moved by Trustee Mayberry and seconded by Trustee Rodriguez that **the Board of Trustees accepts the Superintendent's recommendation to move forward with the planning and conducting of Graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2022, within the parameters of following all of Governor Sisolak's directives to include the priorities of safety and health of students, families, and employees; and staying within budgeted amount currently set for Graduation.** The result of the vote was Unanimous: (Yea: Jeff Church, Adam Mayberry, Ellen Minetto, Diane Nicolet, Joe Rodriguez, Beth Smith, and Angela Taylor.) Final Resolution: Motion Carries.

*President Taylor recessed the meeting for 5 minutes.*

**3.04 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO REVIEW AND PROVIDE DIRECTION ON CURRENT COVID-19 MITIGATION MEASURES IN EFFECT FOR THE 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR INCLUDING FACILITIES MANAGEMENT, TRANSPORTATION, STAFF AND STUDENT EXCLUSIONS, AND FACE COVERINGS FOR DISTRICT FACILITIES AND SCHOOL SITES BASED ON CURRENT FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GUIDANCE**



Staff provided a presentation on the current COVID-19 data and mitigation measures in the Wahoe County School District. The number of cases and test positivity was extremely high; however, fewer students were excluded due to changes in isolation and quarantine rules. The Nevada Association of School Superintendents had sent a letter to the Governor's Office requesting greater local control over the mandates for schools and school districts. There were no recommended changes to current practices.

President Taylor opened the meeting to public comment.

The Board received an email from Brandon Siri.

President Taylor requested clarification surrounding Pre-K and contact tracing. Superintendent McNeill explained Emergency Directive 048 did not require Pre-K student to wear masks in class; however, they were required to wear them on school buses. Since the students were not required to wear masks, there had been some questions regarding contact tracing and the District's COVID team would address those questions during their weekly meeting.

Trustee Church commented that he would like to see face shields as an option for everyone instead of the use of masks.

#### **4. Reports**

##### **4.01 BOARD REPORTS**

Members of the Board of Trustees reported on their activities, meetings, and events.

##### **4.02 STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

Student Representative Victoria Gomez reported on activities, meetings, and events of the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council.

##### **4.03 SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Superintendent Kristen McNeill reported on her activities including meetings with staff, community leaders and the media.

#### **5. Closing Items**

##### **5.01 PUBLIC COMMENT**

John Eppolito, Protect Nevada Children, spoke against the use of Infinite Campus in the District because of the amount of data they collected and stored on students. He

expressed frustration over the amount of time he had spent advocating for protecting student information and the perceived lack of support from the Board.

Margaret Martini expressed that the District should not be spending money of any kind on Telehealth programming and instead focus on academic programming. She felt that the proposed program was outside of the scope of purpose of the District, which was to provide education, not health care to students or family programs because there were other community organizations that were focused on those types of programs.

The Board received emails from the following:

Will Harper

Paul Klein

Heather Hayes

Diana Jackin

#### **5.02 NEXT MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT**

The next Regular Meeting would take place on Tuesday, February 8, 2022.

#### **5.03 ADJOURN MEETING**

There being no further business to come before the members of the Board, President Taylor declared the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

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**Angela D. Taylor, President**

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**Ellen Minetto, Clerk**