

Special Called Board Meeting Highlights
January 17, 2021

The Gates County Board of Education met in a special called session on Sunday, January 17, 2021 through a remote meeting using the Zoom format. This was agreed to by the board members in order to follow safety guidelines. Chairman Ray Felton called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m. The following board members were present: Mr. Ray Felton, Mrs. Glendale Boone, Mr. Leslie Byrum, Mrs. Sallie Ryan and Mrs. Amanda Pacitto.

Mr. Leslie Byrum made a motion to approve the agenda. Mrs. Amanda Pacitto seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion carried unanimously.

There was a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Felton noted that a board member had requested that the board re-visit the decision to return to face-to-face instruction, due to concerns with events that occurred at the schools last week. He asked Dr. Williams to address these concerns.

Superintendent Statement - Dr. Barry Williams:

Last week we had Pre-K, Kindergarten and 1st grade attend school for face-to-face instruction. Overall the week was very positive with administration, faculty and staff all working together to provide a safe learning environment for our students and staff. We greeted parents and students, took temperatures of students and gathered attestation tickets from parents, provided school bus transportation and provided meals for students.

During the week we had two incidents, which Chairman Felton mentioned at the beginning of the meeting. When those incidents occurred, Mr. Wright, the school principal and I worked together in following CDC guidelines as outlined in our Plan A document and contacting Albemarle Regional Health Service for guidance. We then took action and made the decisions to mediate the issues.

We know that while we are doing everything we can to prevent exposure, there **may** be incidents that we will have to address.

We are prepared to deliver face-to-face instruction at the elementary schools for grades Pre-K through 5 beginning Tuesday, January 19th with the exception of T.S. Cooper who is slated to start on January 28th. I would like to remind everyone, parents, staff and students, to please monitor yourself and your children and if you or they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, please do not attend or send students to school. If you are in school, please wear a face mask and practice social distancing at all times.

If the board chooses to delay face-to-face instruction, we are prepared, and will continue remote/virtual learning for all students.

Board Member Comments:

- Leslie Byrum: Apologized for not answering all e-mails
Some principals would like to return to face-to-face February 15
Need to compromise by staggering grades
May need to move teachers, evaluate subs
- Sallie Ryan: Confused as why we are having this meeting
We have a plan with CDC and ARHS guidelines
Everyone has to follow safety guidelines
We do not need to keep changing – makes it difficult for staff and parents
- Amanda Pacitto Trusts the plan that has been presented
We need to move forward with the plan that was approved at the January 11, 2021 meeting
- Glendale Boone Considered all sides, and agrees that the students should come back as approved at the last board meeting on January 11, 2021

Dr Williams did clarify that some have referred to T.S. Cooper as being closed. The school is not closed. The students are continuing with virtual/remote instruction until January 28, 2021, due to staffing needs. There was not a COVID outbreak. Other counties have encountered some of these same issues, and have had to adjust the scheduling.

It was asked what the community can do to sign up as volunteers for the schools. Dr. Williams answered:

- Complete Volunteer Application
- Pay \$12.00 for Criminal Background check
- Receive letter of recommendation from principal
- Mrs. Chante Jordan, Human Resources Director, will submit to board for approval

Chairman Felton asked the board members to state their position on returning to face-to-face instruction as approved on January 11, 2021, with the exception of T.S. Cooper Elementary. All board members responded they were in agreement to return to face-to-face instruction as previously approved at the January 11, 2021 meeting.

Dr. Williams clarified that Pre-K – 5th grade will return to face-to-face instruction on Tuesday, January 19, 2021, with the exception of T.S. Cooper Elementary, that will start on January 28, 2021. The high school and middle school will return to face-to-face instruction under Plan B, beginning January 26, 2021. He felt this meeting was beneficial to clarify for everyone, and to reiterate how important it is for everyone to follow the safety guidelines. We will get through this.

Chairman Felton noted that he and the board members have been bombarded with e-mails and phone calls. The board has heard, and considered all the concerns. He feels the board has made the best decision for the most involved.

The board thanked everyone for their attendance.

Mr. Leslie Byrum made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Glendale Boone seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Chairman Felton adjourned the meeting at 4:37 p.m.