

Special Called Session Board Meeting
January 4, 2021

The Gates County Board of Education met in a special called session on Monday, January 4, 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 9:00 a.m. The following board members were present: Mr. Ray Felton, Mrs. Glendale Boone, Mr. Leslie Byrum, Mrs. Sallie Ryan and Mrs. Amanda Pacitto.

Chairman Felton opened the meeting by stating the items that needed to be addressed:

1. Confirm or adjust the start dates for Plan A and Plan B for the schools.
2. Confirm the start date of our students with disabilities.
3. Confirm the status of high school and middle school athletics for 2021.
4. Confirm the status of the community center activities for 2021.

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

Dr. Williams read his opening statement:

I would like to express my appreciation to the Gates County Board of Education and to Gates County Schools' administration, faculty and staff for all they have done in providing a continuum of education services for the students of Gates County.

On December 7, 2020, the Board of Education made the decision to transition to Plan A for elementary schools beginning January 6th and Plan B for the middle and high schools beginning January 12th.

Since December 7th, the percent of citizens with COVID-19 in North Carolina has increased to a high of 13.3% as of December 31, 2020. Gates County has also seen an increase in the number of cases and is classified by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services as Tier Red: Critical Community Spread. The school district has also seen an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases over the last two months.

To date we have had 15 employees & 1 child test positive for COVID-19.

The school district has planned and prepared for Face-to-Face instruction for students. With the holiday season just now behind us and the Tier Red status for Gates County from NCDHHS who recommends that "red counties need to do even more to slow the spread of COVID-19 in their communities", I ask that the board specifically address the following:

- Confirmation or adjustment to the start dates for the schools under Plans A and B

I would also ask the Board of Education to confirm the services of the following programs for 2021:

- Open status of the Gates County Community Center for 2021
- Continuation of Athletics under the guidelines of the NCHSAA
- Continuation of In-person instruction and services for Special Needs students

Thank you!

Board members' discussion included the following:

- Suggestion to reopen schools for face-to-face instruction in February
- Even though we are in a "red" (high COVID cases) designated county, other counties surrounding us are also in the red designation, and they have made it work with face-to-face instruction
- Suggestion of staggering the grades coming back
- The board members stressed that everyone has to do their part to make this successful
- There were concerns about the staff
- Status of staff being able to get the COVID vaccine – health department is in process of setting up a clinic, but employees can call the health department about vaccinations prior to the clinic

Item Number 1 – Confirmation or adjustment of start dates for Plan A and Plan B for the schools

Mrs. Glendale Boone made the motion as follows:

- Pre-K, Kindergarten and 1st Grade to resume face-to-face instruction on Tuesday, 1-12-2021
- 2nd Grade and 3rd Grade to resume face-to-face instruction on Tuesday, 1-19-2021
- 4th Grade and 5th Grade to resume face-to-face instruction on Tuesday, 1-26-2021

Mrs. Sallie Ryan seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote as follows:

Leslie Byrum – No

Glendale Boone – Yes

Sallie Ryan – Yes

Amanda Pacitto – Yes

Ray Felton – No

At this time there was some concern about the availability of this meeting for the public. Chairman Felton called for a recess at 9:43 a.m. to allow a change in format, using the county commissioners live stream.

The meeting resumed at 10:31 a.m. using the new format.

There was some discussion regarding the return of face-to-face instruction for the middle school and high school. After discussion, Mrs. Pacitto made a motion for all students to return to face-to-face at the middle school and high school, using Plan B, on Tuesday, January 19, 2021. Mrs. Sallie Ryan seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item No. 2 – Start Date for our students with disabilities

Mrs. Glendale Boone made a motion for the EC students to return to face-to-face instruction on Tuesday, January 12, 2021. Mrs. Sallie Ryan seconded the motion. Chairman called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item No. 3 – Status of high school and middle school athletics for 2021

Mrs. Sallie Ryan made a motion to continue to follow the North Carolina Athletic Association guidelines. Mrs. Amanda Pacitto seconded the motion. Chairman called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

Item No. 4 – Status of community center activities for 2021

Dr. Williams suggested that the community center continue activities. It was asked if this would include youth basketball and Mr. Jeremy Wright answered that as far as he knew it would. Mrs. Amanda Pacitto made a motion for the community center to remain open. Mrs. Sallie Ryan seconded the motion, with the comment “as long as we follow safety guidelines”. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Williams read a statement that he plans to put on the website, notifying the community of the decisions made this morning.

Mrs. Amanda Pacitto asked about the closed sign being removed from the playground at the community center. Dr. Williams said he would take care of this.

Mrs. Glendale Boone made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Sallie Ryan 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 10:56 a.m.