

Jackson County School District

Superintendent Update – August 18, 2020

By: Dr. John D. Strycker



August Board of Education Meeting: Jackson County School District Students Glad to be Back in School

The Jackson County Board of Education August board meeting took place last evening at the district office. Highlighting the meeting was a report regarding coming back to school for the 2020-21 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. John Strycker, JCSD Superintendent, began the meeting by stating, “Our students and staff are glad to be back in school. One middle school class conducted an informal poll before I entered the room during my morning building walk-through, and out of about 20 students in the room, 17 were glad to be back in school and preferred a face-to-face education compared to a virtual education.” Dr. Strycker noted that this is the same message he is hearing across the county by stating, “Staff and students want to be in school.”

During the board meeting, Dr. Strycker reviewed the Reopening Resource Guide and the COVID-19 Positive Case Report with the board members. “As you can see from our first week of school including today, there are positive COVID-19 cases being reported for both staff and students. As of today, we have had 20 student cases and 13 employee cases to report,” said Strycker. Strycker explained the process of how the district is handling each case from both the school and district level. “We are taking each case seriously and will implement necessary safety precautions to prevent the spread of the virus,” noted Strycker.

The Board also heard a curriculum update from Director of Curriculum and Central Office Administration, Dr. Penny Westfaul. “Since school began, our teachers have been training students to become familiar with the flow of instruction in Canvas. We feel it is vital that all who participate in instruction are prepared for distance learning, if the need arises,” said Dr. Westfaul. Westfaul also updated the board regarding the ACT initiative. “Our ACT instructional coaches are working together to plan ‘boot camps’ for students in preparation for the upcoming administrations of the ACT,” noted Dr. Westfaul.

Additionally, the board reviewed district finances. While Strycker is very pleased with the current fund balance (money in reserve) at 20% or roughly \$15 million, he pointed out that for the current fiscal year, the district is dipping into the fund balance. “No one would argue that COVID-19 is a reason to use ‘Rainy Day’ Funds. Nonetheless, we cannot operate in deficit spending,” said Strycker. Strycker explained that the district will continue to monitor district funds and have a plan, when necessary, to balance the budget.

The board aims to continue pursuing a facility/bond plan and is currently conducting both a facility condition assessment and a demographic study to obtain base data for planning purposes. At this time, the board is planning for a possible Spring 2021 bond election, but may move that date back based upon public opinion, if necessary. “This facility plan is too important for us to not have public support just because we pushed forward during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will seek input from our community as to how fast we should proceed with our facility plan,” indicated Strycker.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding this press release, please contact Superintendent John Strycker at 228-283-3000.