

WESTMORELAND COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
MONTROSS, VIRGINIA
BOARD MINUTES
January 5, 2022

The Westmoreland County School Board held a Special Called Board Meeting on Wednesday, January 5, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. at the Gerald B. Roane Center for Excellence Building, Montross, Virginia.

Present:

Mr. Ralph Fallin, Chair
Ms. Iris Lane, Vice Chair
Mrs. Katherine Lewis, Member
Mrs. Sandra Ramsey, Member
Dr. Daniel Wallace, Member (participated virtually)

Others Present:

Dr. Michael Perry, Superintendent
Ms. Cathy Rice, Deputy Superintendent

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Fallin, Chair.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Delegations/Presentations

Virginia Department of Health Update

Dr. Richard Williams, Director, Three Rivers Health District, provided an update from the Virginia Department of Health. Dr. Williams shared that the Omicron variant is causing huge surges across the United States and in Virginia. Omicron appears to cause less severe illness, but is spread quite easily. The Three Rivers Health District had close to 1,000 new cases in the past week, and is expected to exceed that count in the coming weeks. Rapid tests are less accurate with Omicron, yielding a 35-40% false positive. Vaccinations remain effective with reducing the severity of the illness. Dr. Williams reported 58% of Westmoreland County adult residents are fully vaccinated. Boosters are recommended for all 16 years and older. Three Rivers is engaged in a vaccine campaign for children ages 5-11. Only 15% of Westmoreland residents ages 5-11 have had at least one dose. Dr. Williams shared that testing is available through the Three Rivers Health District by appointment.

Dr. Williams indicated that the Omicron variant is so easily spread that existing mitigation strategies may be ineffective against its transmission; however, it would not be effective to try to change mitigation strategies. He stated the division should keep up its defensive measures, including masking. Masks will not be able to stop the spread of the Omicron variant, but will help some. Any potential barrier that can be put in place, including masks, should be used.

Dr. Williams shared the VDH Interim Isolation/Quarantine guidance. The new guidelines recommended five days of isolation for positive cases, and five days of quarantine for those

exposed, followed by five days of proper masking. The new guidelines apply to K-12 settings when individuals can properly and consistently mask for an additional five days after ending their five-day isolation or quarantine. If an individual is unable to consistently and correctly mask they should isolate for the full ten days. If an individual is unvaccinated or has not yet received the booster and is unable to consistently and correctly wear a mask, they should quarantine for the full ten days. Children who are fully vaccinated and not yet eligible to receive a booster do not need to quarantine after exposure, so long as they wear a well-fitting mask for ten days.

Dr. Williams recommended systematic testing to detect positive cases. He recommended participation in the ViSSTA program to support testing.

Action Items

Approval of COVID-19 Mitigation Protocols

Masks

Board members discussed maintaining the mask mandate in the schools. Board members unanimously voiced a strong desire to keep the mask mandate in place for all students and staff. Board members cited the high rate of transmission, and the need to maintain available mitigation strategies.

A motion was made by Board member Mrs. Ramsey, and seconded by Ms. Lane to maintain the mask mandate for all students and staff.

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Aye; Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

Quarantine

Board members discussed the new guidelines which reduce the length of isolation for positive cases and quarantine for those exposed to five days, followed by five days of proper masking. The division's current guidelines require ten days of isolation and fourteen days of quarantine. Board members unanimously voiced a strong desire to maintain a longer period of isolation and quarantine than five days. After discussion, the Board determined ten days of isolation for positive cases, and ten days of quarantine for those exposed, would be optimal to reduce the risk of transmission within the schools.

A motion was made by Board member Mrs. Lewis, and seconded by Mrs. Ramsey to follow the new guidelines for isolation and quarantine, but to substitute five days with ten days for the length of required isolation and quarantine.

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Aye; Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

School Board Member Comments

Chair Fallin thanked all those who attended the meeting or joined online.

Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mrs. Ramsey, seconded by Mrs. Lewis, and unanimously approved by Board Members to adjourn the meeting.