

Governor's Education Excellence Commission
August 19, 2020
State Office Building Auditorium
8:15 AM – 9:55 AM

Commission Members in Attendance: Governor Gary R. Herbert, Lt Governor Spencer Cox (via call in), Tami Pyfer, Karen Peterson, Pat Jones, Heidi Matthews, Lauren Merkley, Shannon Dulaney, Harris Simmons, Laney Benedict, Syd Dickson, Jacey Skinner, Tracy Gruber, Lexi Cunningham, Melissa Ballard, Martha Bradley (for Ruth Watkins), Kimberlee Carlile, Jani Iwamoto, Ann Millner, Mark Huntsman, David Woolstenhulme, Jacob Wright, Stephanie Pitcher, Steve Waldrip, Peter Reichard, Dixie Garrison, Nubia Pena, Theresa Creel, DeLaina Tonks, Mckay Jensen, Pam Perlilch, Clay Christensen.

Commission Members Excised: Ruth Watkins, Lyle Hillard, Mary Wohlforth.

Commission Members Absent: Alex Hume, Bill Crim, Clint Betts

Pat Jones chaired the meeting.

A. Approval of Minutes from January 24th Meeting

Harris Simmons made a motion to approve minutes. Syd Dixon seconded the motion, all approved.

B. Welcome – Governor Herbert

C. Public Education Presentation: Return to instruction plans, Q&A. – Superintendent Syd Dickson and Dr. Lexi Cunningham

Syd Dickson stated that if there was one best way to open schools safely the whole country would be doing it. Four reopening plans are being implemented throughout the state, each with 2 or 3 models to learn remotely if needed in addition to safety protocols being written for lunch, recess, restrooms etc.

- **Remote learning**, (Districts 4%, Charters 12%): Safest approach but also most challenging since not every family has access to broadband, universal childcare, or social and emotional support.
- **Hybrid B**, (Districts 7%, Charters 25%): Puts fewer students in the classroom at a time by having students come in on alternating days and learn remotely on their off days. Broadband and childcare are still issues. This plan allows students a touch point with teachers and counselors for needed support and offers the needed social aspect of school.
- **Hybrid A**, (Districts 31%, Charters 19%): Shortens the time students are in school allowing teachers and families time to practice remote learning incase the need arises to toggle to a remote setting in the future.

- **Five days face to face**, (Districts 58%, Charters 51%): With a plan in place to transition to remote learning if needed. This is seen more in our rural and remote settings where class sizes are smaller and COVID case counts are low.

Q&A topics discussed:

- The need for parental access to good information and a place to document concerns. Districts have their plans posted to their websites, the State of Utah and the School Board both have Q&A segments on their sites as well. www.coronavirus.utah.gov, and www.schools.utah.gov/coronavirus.
- Concern that there are more unfilled teaching positions this year, but so far that number is about the same as this time last year.
- Each District in partnership with their local and State Health Departments will determine if a change from in person to hybrid or remote learning is needed.

D. Higher Education Presentation: Return to instruction plans and Q&A. – Commissioner David Woolstenhulme, Spencer Jenkins, Kim Zeibarth

Dave Woolstenhulme talked on how the main focus of Higher Education has been to make adjustments to keep students on track for graduation. This summer had an all-time high number of students enrolled in online classes.

Spencer Jenkins, Chief Student Affairs Officer, shared a presentation on the transition and preparation process to Higher Education’s opening plans for this fall, Gating Conditions for opening, Institutional Plans, and the fiscal impact COVID-19 has had on Students and Institutions.

Kim Zeibarth, Associate Commissioner of Technical Education shared a PowerPoint presentation on the Technical College COVID response. Technical Colleges are well equipped to social distance in their in-person settings because of the nature of their organizational characteristics already in place. Because of the work-based nature of many programs offered, technical colleges had to close down these programs through March and April. The Governor’s Plan for Economic recovery was released in May and offered helpful operational safety guidance that aligned well with the programs offered. Phased Guidelines were built in to fit each campus for each color-coded restriction level. The safety plan now includes testing, contact tracing, and shutdown if necessary. Kim discussed the impact shutting down has had on employees and students. Some observations of note include a lack of uniform student access to online learning, and online instruction is more difficult for instructors since their background is in the industry they are teaching not in education.

Q&A topics discussed:

- Contingency plan specifications for schools who have cases in their schools.
- Leniency with social distancing for school sports more than in the classroom started with the decision, that for many beneficial reasons to students, we want to try to have high

school sports and other extracurricular activities. Preventative measures and standards are being created and uniformly enforced specific to each sport.

- Social and Emotional wellbeing efforts include councilors reaching out to students over the summer, well checks on students, family support, teacher wellbeing efforts, and diversity and equity issues are being addressed. CARES and GEERS money has been used for these additional support efforts.
- If there is a way to increase school nursing support in schools, it would be beneficial.
- The business community is impacted by the decisions to close schools as their employees will need to find care for children on short notice.
- COVID safety training for students living on campus, and with younger children is taking place to help them understand the importance of masks.

E. Closing Remarks – Governor Herbert

The Governor thanked the many people who have gotten us to where we are today, he noted we are not done with this yet, but we keep moving in the right direction. There is no single right way to move forward, but we need to try. Our young people need the opportunity to have a good education and having a variety of options helps parents choose what is best for their family. This year has been frustrating for many people, but if parents lead out with a good attitude, their children will have one too.

Safety is first and foremost in our schools, parents can expect that schools are doing everything they reasonably can to accomplish this. As we move through uncharted waters we can learn and improve what we are doing to send our kids into a safe environment where they can be taught, and teachers can go into a safe environment with the tools they need to teach in a safe environment. There is no such thing as zero risk even if we stay home, so the expectation is to create an environment with minimal risk. Let's pull together in the spirit of cooperation to make this the best and safest school year possible.

He left us with one last thought: The Legislature is trying to find ways to use money from the Cares act most effectively. The Governor asked that we voice our ideas to them.

The Commission adjourned.

**Tentative Next Meeting
Tuesday, October 13, 2020
9:00 AM – 10:30 AM
Capitol Board Room**