

LEARN BUILD LEAD

Fremont Joint School District No. 215
Regular School Board Meeting
March 16, 2020
Fremont School District Office 6:00 p.m.

Attending: Bonnie Moon-Board Chair
 Jon Bailey-Trustee
 Tia Cherry-Trustee
 Julianne Hill-Trustee
 Byron Stutzman-Superintendent
 Hali Mackert-Clerk/Treasurer

Chairman Bonnie Moon called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

Trustee Tia Cherry offered a prayer.

Trustee Shawn Dye made a motion to approve the board agenda. The motion was seconded by Julianne Hill. All "ayes", motion carried.

Superintendent Stutzman explained why there isn't an action item on the agenda. He said Board Policy 2210 gives the Superintendent the decision to close school. The Board's role is policy and governance and the Superintendent's role is leadership and administration.

Superintendent Stutzman said every other district around us is closed or closing. He has been reading all the documentation and verbiage from the CDC. The Region 6 Superintendent's had a good discussion after the Governor's address on Sunday, and the Governor left the responsibility on the districts. He has asked Keith Richey, Emergency Management Coordinator for Fremont County to come to our meeting.

The Superintendent said he is recommending a soft close holding school tomorrow, March 17, so we have time to work with students and for parents to set up childcare; then no school until April 6 with a caveat we may call some students back if we need to have more communication with them. With the pressure we're getting it's probably the right direction to go. We will never know what we're doing is right unless we don't do it. And it COVID-19 blows up on us.

Trustee Jon Bailey said he liked the soft school option; this week is a soft close and then be closed for two weeks. He said it's interesting as you study what social distancing will do and how it flattens that curve.

Trustee Bonnie Moon asked why this doesn't require board action, because when we approve the snow closures it needs board action. Superintendent Stutzman said the board approves it after it's over and done so we can make the corrections and send to the state. We will ask you to approve this closure at the April meeting.

Superintendent Stutzman said let's start with closing until April 6 and see how the virus plays out. We like the flexibility if things change.

Trustee Julianne Hill said historically we have dealt with large or real events. She said there are common sense things we can do as a school, she believes. She is not 100% sold we should close school at this point. If you're sick stay home, use CDC recommendations because short and early school closure probably won't slow down the virus. She said, "I'm thinking if I was a mother or child going to school the best thing is to keep things as normal as possible and we should evaluate it day by day. I think we should act rationally using the facts that we have." She gathered absentee information from the district from a week ago and a year ago at this time; today was very high. She knows parents are very concerned about what they are bringing home to grandma and grandpa. I feel like we need to act rationally using facts that we have. China got their first confirmed case and then it exploded, but now it's coming down and they feel they have turned the corner there. However, she thinks it is different in China than it is here in Fremont County. If parents don't want kids in school, we should accommodate that.

Trustee Tia Cherry said I have a lot of the same feelings as Julianne. Tia said she's concerned about the safety of children a lot don't have a safe space and school is their safe space. She's also worried about a solution to feed kids. She's concerned about the para's, bus drivers and classified staff since they rely on this to pay their bills. She's worried about hours for our high school students not just elementary for credentials.

Superintendent Stutzman said we will continue to pay classified staff and the State Department of Education will continue to fund the same amount. I do think it will be a great opportunity to utilize these folks. We can have them help clean, assist teachers, etc.

There was discussion with principals and teachers on what we can do to teach kids at home. using Google Classroom, iReady, iStation, etc, and how to accommodate students without internet and elementary vs. secondary. We want the students to be able to maintain, and then we want to be able to help them grow. Safety is first and foremost in our decision making.

Principal Larry Bennett said they have an agreement where students can check a chromebook out of the library. There are about 40 students who don't have internet at home. Soft closing is a good idea and it will take a few days to get into place. Shop class and welders can switch their curriculum up. He said the accountability will be interesting and a challenge for teachers and we need a day to get the message across.

Principal Tim Tanner said we were thinking we would do weekly work packets that could go out on Friday. We would send home reading books and a schedule of things to do. Parents could come and pick up the packets.

Heidi Stutzman said iReady and iStation have contingency plans, and as long as we set up parent portals and instruction, students can get on those online programs.

Trustee Shawn Dye we may say that it's not serious and it's just the flu, but there are people in the community that think this is the end of the world and if we do nothing; they will blame us. Other districts are closing not have fingers pointed at them. I would love to see packets put together. We need to think of everyone in the community.

Trustee Bonnie Moon said parents have called and she's going to address it. She said I worry about school closures and some students can't read or write and families that both parents working. School is a place to take care of kids and things have shifted. It is our responsibility to help the community by sending our students home. She asked what our goal was in closing school.

Superintendent Stutzman said our goal is to keep that spike of COVID-19 cases from happening and flatten the exposure. Our exposure is going to be there, and eventually, we will all be exposed. If we can start with this school closure and take care of the hysteria out there, then we can go back to following good science guidelines.

Trustee Julianne Hill said time usually helps subside the hysteria. Time will help level out the infection itself, the hysteria is there, and we have to answer to that.

Trustee Shawn Dye said we're looking at this from an educational standpoint, but I'd like to hear from Keith Richie on a community standpoint.

Keith Richie said we've had EBOLA, Swine Flu, this is the like the flu, and we will get through this. He said the average age of fatalities is 80. I'm here to support you as a school district in whatever you decide to do. He said we do have test kits available, and a doctor or physician's assistant can take the nasal swab. Most tests go to the State of Idaho and it's usually a 24-hour turnaround.

Trustee Tia Cherry said teachers will still be reporting to schools, but social distancing themselves, and if need to, their students will be able to come to the school. All hired staff report to their designated buildings and we will have jobs for them with appropriate distancing.

There was discussion about students not having internet access or a computer at home and if they would still be able to come to school to use a computer. The principals said they would be able to, and they would keep them 6 feet from others. Superintendent Stutzman said we will figure out a way to get connectivity to a student if needed.

Jon Bailey moved to Adjourn 7:38P.M.