

ACEC Board Meeting: July 27, 2020

Start time: 7:00 pm

Board Members in Attendance: Bryan Engelhardt, Erika Gregorius, Shari Hanneman, Dana Patel, Elaine Lewis, Ashay Desai, Ashley Bath, Erica Cates, Stephanie Markman, Gina Connor, and Deanna Standorf

Purpose of meeting reviewed: To answer questions regarding the survey due July 31st (return in person or virtual) and how to prepare for how to go into the school year.

In response to the questionnaire that Bryan emailed: he received 45 emails that accounted for 72 students. Of those 72 students, 35 were option A (virtual no matter what) or option B (virtual if Montessori). 37 students were option C (in person). Of the 35 students, 22 fell under the category of virtual no matter what and 13 were in the virtual if Montessori category. Also, according to the by-laws and Ms. Bath, if a family chooses the virtual option, they will not lose their spot in the school.

Ms. Bath brought up that during the school board meeting, our district was considered level green so in person school was not considered a concern. However, during the end of last week, the county emailed that our district level red. Ms. Bath wanted to clarify that the color level is changing week to week so it's hard to put a finger on what decision will be made by the district. Links shared to check "burden levels":

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm>

<https://www.co.winnebago.wi.us/health/divisions-program-areas/communicable-disease/covid-19-coronavirus/wchd-weekly-data-2>

Principal's report:

There is a new hire for 1/2/3. Her name is Molly DuPont. She has lots of experience teaching 1st and 2nd grades. She used to work in the Kimberly and Appleton school districts but moved away for the year and is now back in the area. Mrs. Connor will be her Montessori mentor. The school district has decided that volunteers will not be allowed this year but they have made an exception for our school because of our charter. It needs to be passed by the safety committee in the future weeks.

Answering the question "what would virtual school look like?": Based on 35 students, we meet the interest level and it's a possibility that we would be able to have a Montessori style virtual classroom (the threshold was 20 students). We do have staff interested. We could do just Alliance virtually based on how well it worked during the summer school session with Mrs. O. Answering the question "what should we write if we picked virtual only if Montessori for the July 31st survey?": Pick the virtual option and then the virtual learning style would be decided by Ms. Bath and ACE teachers. They would go through the list of families that picked the virtual option

and select the ACE students to be in one group together rather than get placed by grade level with other schools (this is how it worked for summer school).

Answering the question “are we able to switch at the quarter or semester if numbers go down”: the district has currently decided that the switch can only be made at semester. However, Ms. Bath thinks they will constantly be in a state of reassessing what is the most safe outcome for the students. They will also check attendance rates per building so that would also be a factor.

For students attending virtual school, the numbers are evenly split for the grades. There were 7 students for the kindergarten grade but the survey did not make its way to new K students/families (we will try to reach out once we have family emails). Mrs Standorf stated that she is not sure which choice her family will make but wondered how virtual and in school options would work for her class since she is the only kindergarten teacher and wouldn't be able to do both.

Answering the question “how flexible are we as a school”: we have a 1 year outline but there is no specific 2-3 year plan (which is how most of our classrooms are). We won't know until we get the numbers back from the survey.

Answering the question “would there be one teacher for K-5”: we have enough numbers for at least one Montessori cohort but we would have to see what the final numbers are to see if there is enough for more. She informed us that one teacher has expressed interest in teaching virtually. Mrs. Cates pointed out that, for those picking the virtual option, it will not be 100% Montessori since that's not the way Montessori teaching was designed. Mrs. Allen asked if virtual would include PE, music, art, etc? They were unsure of the answer at this time but teachers will not be teaching both in school and virtually. These subjects may be something that students forego if they pick the virtual option.

Even though it's not quite clear what a virtual ACE classroom would look like, Ms. Bath reiterated that the July 31st deadline is firm even for ACE families.

Answering the question “what will the attendance policy look like and how will that work for in-class students who miss school due to illness”: the attendance policy will be lenient this year but Ms. Bath was not sure how making up class work would work if students miss a lot of school days.

Answering the question “would it be a possibility for in school families to be together in a K-5 classroom to decrease transmission rather than K, 1/2/3, 4/5”: Mrs Connor replied that the teachers have different standards that they are required to meet and it would be difficult to do K-5. Ms Bath added that it has been discussed but not decided upon.

Answering questions regarding volunteers and parents in the school building: All parents (Alliance and Roosevelt) can come to the office but only Alliance parents can go to the

classrooms for volunteering. It is not yet known if volunteers may have to get periodically tested. We are waiting for the safety committee to establish the parameters.

Ad-Hoc Virtual Education Committee, 1st Semester:

Mrs. Markman suggested that instead of creating a committee right away, to create a parent list, so that the teacher who takes on virtual teaching can first decide what they need before parents start creating materials that may not be needed.

Per the link: The committee will provide Montessori training to families with students learning virtually, provide materials related to curriculum by grade level, facilitate the creation of physical Montessori materials for the home, organize virtual and small in-person meetups (for those interested), provide a place for parents/guardians to discuss and organize their successes and challenges, provide creative solutions to problems as they arise, and promote teacher-parent connections to achieve ACEC's mission for those learning in a virtual environment.

The idea would be to have a list of parents of students who are attending school virtually. These parents could help create materials for the virtual teacher and learn about Montessori teaching methods so that they can implement a better educational environment in their homes. If interested in helping, or even just to get more info regarding how it will work once implemented, please email Bryan ([bryan.engelhardt@gmail.com](mailto:bryan.engelhardt@gmail.com)). The Desai family offered to help Bryan get things started.

Addendum: Ashay Desai will Chair/lead the group and can be reached at: [desai@uwosh.edu](mailto:desai@uwosh.edu).

Volunteer Coordination Report:

Bryan E. and Sara K. put together a volunteer (in the age of a pandemic) policy. The ACEC council hoped to present this policy to the safety committee and help guide their policy for our school since we know how the school works and how to safely volunteer in the classroom. The policy is similar to the previous guidelines, but takes extra precautions by wearing masks in the school at all times, taking extra precautions when feeling ill, coming in to help only during regularly scheduled times, etc. Many parents and teachers noted that it seemed reasonable and appropriate in the comments section. Ms. Bath appreciated the initiative and thought that it would show the safety committee that we are willing to be responsible.

Open Forum:

Mrs Allen reported that she did not know what keyboarding will look like for the upcoming school year. She needs more guidance from the school district. Her 1st choice is to teach as normal but she is not sure how that would work since students are required to share keyboards or how cleaning would work. Ms. Bath was also not sure. The other option would be to teach in the classroom but it would not be possible to move keyboards from room to room so she would teach general music instead.

“When will parents find out if there is a Montessori option?”

Ms Bath informed us that she is not sure. She is hoping it will be as soon as possible but notes that it will take a while to go through all the information from the surveys.

“How will things look like in the classrooms? Will kids interact with other rooms before school/recess/specials?”

Per Ms Bath, to minimize the risk of COVID 19 transmission: there will be mask requirements, mixing of different classrooms will decrease, lunch may possibly be in the classrooms, specialists may go to the classroom. However, all of this is hypothetical and she appreciates parent ideas and support.

It was agreed to get the minutes and information from this meeting out quickly so that families could use the information to make their decision by the July 31st deadline.

“Mrs. Cates’ class is extremely small. Is there a layout we can view before we make the decision?”

Perhaps other areas of the school (like the library) can be used but it depends on how many students will be returning.

“Fundraising is extremely important to keeping our school going. How will we fundraise next year, whether it is virtual or in-person?”

We have another meeting this summer where this will be discussed. It is tentatively scheduled for August 24th.

“Regarding the AD HOC Committee, is it possible to send an email to the interested 35 parents to gauge their interest?” (It was noted during the question that digital learning using the Montessori method was difficult even for parents who were familiar with the Montessori methods in the classroom. It would be a useful tool to learn about the teaching style so that we can help our kids “learn like they do in their classroom.”)

Bryan hopes that all parents would want to be involved. It could also be used as a way for parents to bounce ideas off of each other and the virtual program teacher may have more input on useful tools. (The site <https://montessori.tools> was also shared for digital learning.) A parent was concerned that waiting until the end August may decrease parent involvement to help create materials. An invitation will be sent out to parents.

“Would it be possible to have remote morning class/announcements/teaching portion and then be offline during work time?”

Per Ms Bath, the district does not have the resources to implement this.

“Our numbers (as of the end of last week) are in the high category so we would be level red. Would we then all do digital learning?”

Ms Bath stated that nothing is officially out by the school boards but that Winnebago county is sharing the information by school district. (The links were shared previously in the minutes.) The information is available from the county but it fluctuates. The resource is “available and decisions will be made off of that” but decisions have not been made yet and won’t be made until closer to school opening.

This was the last of the questions. The meeting ended at 8:25

**Teacher and Parent Questions(s):**

1. Are any of the teachers interested in teaching virtually rather than in-person?  
yes
2. If an Alliance teacher wishes to teach virtual, then can we work as a Board to attain sufficient virtual student volunteers to fill their teaching load with Alliance students?  
The threshold for an Alliance class is 20 students and 35 students are expected at this point.
3. How flexible do we plan on being with class rosters? For example, are we considering merging K/1, 3/4/5, or pulling students from the same families into one classroom to (a) reduce risk, (b) balance classroom sizes, or (c) enable a virtual Montessori option?  
It would be difficult to do so since teachers of different grades have different standards to meet but no decisions have been made yet.
4. Is there teacher interest in parents **voluntarily** keeping students home for planned intervals (for those who are able) to increase social distancing in the classroom? For example, a fraction of students could be kept home every other week.  
The school board has stated that families have to pick in person school or virtual learning.

**NJSD or ACEC Board Question(s):**

5. Will a family lose their Alliance spot once school returns to a more normal situation?  
No
6. If a parent decides that they want to do virtual school next year, will there be an Alliance option?  
Based on virtual summer school and the interested number of students for 1st semester digital learning, Ms. Bath expects there to be a Montessori virtual classroom.
7. Under what conditions will in-person schooling go “virtual?”  
It hasn’t been decided yet but the school board is using these links to make their decision for the safest option for students:  
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm>

<https://www.co.winnebago.wi.us/health/divisions-program-areas/communicable-disease/covid-19-coronavirus/wchd-weekly-data-2>

8. What are the options if families choose to unenroll during COVID?

**Delayed Priority (Potentially after July 31st)**

9. How will back to school night be handled?
10. Will volunteers be allowed?  
Yes but it still needs to be passed by the safety committee
11. How can we make up for a potential short-fall in fundraising?

12. Should the ACEC board promote a “parent Covid-19 safety and responsibility pledge?”
13. Given 8, should the ACEC board fundraise for hardware to promote ‘Distance “Real Time” Learning?’