

**KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular meeting of
June 10, 2020
Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly Chambers**

CALL TO ORDER; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE; ROLL CALL

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough Board of Education met in regular session on the 10th day of June in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly Chambers. Board President Bridget Mattson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The following members were present to establish a quorum and due notice had been published: Board President Bridget Mattson; Clerk-Treasurer Diane Gubatayao; Board Members Leslie Becker; Jordan Tabb, Paul Robbins Jr. and Thomas Heutte. Vice President Sonya Skan joined the meeting via teleconference at about 6:03 p.m. (A technical issue prevented her being connected telephonically earlier.)

Administrative staff present included: Beth Lougee, Superintendent; Business Manager Katie Parrott; and Board Clerk Kerry Watson.

Vision and Mission Statement

The vision and mission statements were read by School Board Clerk-Treasurer Diane Gubatayao.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion to approve the agenda of June 10, 2020

Moved by: GUBATAYAO; Second by: HEUTTE

ROLL CALL

HEUTTE, GUBATAYAO, BECKER, ROBBINS JR., TABB, MATTSON – ALL AYES

MOTION PASSED

PUBLIC RECOGNITION

Board Member Diane Gubatayao gave recognition to the parents, community members and businesses who organized the promenade parade for the graduating seniors.

She also recognized Marian Gonzales who is retiring as principal of Tongass School of Arts and Sciences after many years with the district. Ms. Gubatayao described her as an exceptional educational leader, and wished her well in her future.

Noting he is co-chair of Ketchikan Little League and softball, Paul Robbins Jr. commented on how impressed he was with the community and small businesses for sponsoring these sports despite economic difficulties.

Moment of Silence

Board President Mattson asked for a moment of silence in light of the current strife in the country, and in respect of continuing to work to build greater diversity and respect in the school district.

CITIZEN REMARKS

(Citizen remarks sent via email were heard first, read by the Board Clerk.)

Jasen Hansen advocated for a full opening of school with a renewed emphasis on hygiene, and requiring sick staff and students to stay home. Students should be in school, he wrote, and under a minimal risk plan. To accommodate the varying comfort levels of families, he suggested some elementary schools could be operated under a different risk environment. In a follow up email, Mr. Hansen suggested that if the low risk plan was chosen, school be scheduled with every student going for a half-day rather than only two days a week.

Michelle Hall asked for clarification on the Wednesday schedule. She stated there were contradictions in school district communications regarding whether it was a school day or not and, if off-site, parents would need to arrange for their children.

Jennifer Enters wrote about the Zoom-delivered schooling option not being effective for her elementary-age son, and taking an emotional toll on him. Children will fall behind with this method, she stated. She did suggest that Zoom could be used effectively to provide instruction for children who were ill and needed to stay home. Take temperatures of children before they enter school and send sick kids home, she wrote.

Parent Jacqueline Hansen wrote about the negative impact of the Zoom meetings on her six-year old son in which he felt unseen and unheard. She stressed there should be less screen time in any plan for the upcoming school year. The low risk plan of two days a week at the school site is unacceptable, she wrote.

Parent of two school-aged children, Rhea Bromley called for schools to be fully open on time in August. She stated concern that students overall will be behind coming back to school in the fall. Ms. Bromley also stated support for more cleaning of the school, hand-washing and other hygiene measures if it would provide for students to be in school five days a week.

Theresa Elliot asked the district to reconsider the risk levels in Ketchikan, as she feels the benefits of physically being in school outweigh the risks. In part, she cited statistics of the low number of coronavirus incidences in children. She objected to students starting school two weeks late, contending that teacher planning time should have already occurred; and stating that lost time for students was an injustice. Ms. Elliot offered suggestions for measures to open school in the fall. She urged that parents be allowed to make a decision on the level of risk they are willing to take for their children to re-enter school.

While stating appreciation that school startup plans were being shared with parents, Erica Nickich wrote that the Board vote on the Smart Start Plan occurred without the public's prior knowledge. This parent asked why school wasn't being opened at the minimal risk level when organized sports, prom and summer camp are currently being offered. She expressed concern with how a low-risk scenario would impact families with full-time working parents. She wrote that teachers are receiving more and more professional development, when the time and money needs to be spent on the children. Kids need to be in class, wrote Ms. Nickich.

Shelby Reese wrote of her frustration with district decisions such as the early release Wednesdays. The parent of children in all grade levels (elementary, middle school and high school), wrote that the early release had been untenable with daycare issues, so she had to take her children with her to work on those afternoons. Ms. Reese felt that children will fall behind in school with any of the Smart Start plans, due to the Wednesday schedule. She provided suggestions for keeping schools clean and using funds from this past school year, which she indicated were available due to it being shortened. She wrote there were other possibilities as well to make school safe and productive. She stated she thought the district would receive hundreds of letters from parents who have found schooling at home unmanageable.

Jessica Freeman provided a succinct statement asking for a reopening of school in the fall with a full time Monday through Friday schedule. Children need social interaction, and many parents are unable to work or can't afford childcare with other proposed school schedules, wrote Ms. Freeman.

Shana Criscola, parent of a high school student, wrote that school re-start information was not provided in a timely manner, although she appreciated the June 4 communication to parents from the Superintendent. The motion and Smart Start plan discussed at a recent school board meeting were not adequately communicated,

she wrote; and involved significant changes to the start of school. She also felt information about the Wednesday schedule was misleading. She objected to zero cases of COVID-19 in Ketchikan being used to determine a low risk or minimal risk. Parents shouldn't be forced to choose between their children's education and making a living, she stated. Children have the right to an education and the school district needs to be accountable to parents, she wrote.

Nicole Koenneker wrote that this would be the first year for her child in the school district. She called for school to be 5 days a week for full days. She stated she was discouraged with the manner in which school was provided at the end of the year, with participation being optional. She felt it would have been possible to provide new contact material through Zoom. Decisions by the Smart Start Team should factor in the quality of education that Ketchikan students deserve, she wrote. She also described the effect on children psychologically when they learn from a distance without social interaction.

Jennifer Castle submitted several ideas for next year's school schedule. Classes could be set up for 100% student participation on all school days by using video cameras and laptops in the classroom to allow students at home to see the classroom. With this method, teachers wouldn't have to prepare two different lessons for the separate student groups, she wrote; and students at home and in class could learn together and it would be more engaging. She also suggested utilizing the Alaska Digital Academy for the online academics.

Annette Headley expressed concern with the future health of young people from not attending school full time. She said the online learning was not effective and not engaging for young children. She also expressed concern for the children who might be exposed to physical or emotional abuse or neglect while at home. Ms. Headley questioned if budget had been a factor in the schooling decisions. She thanked the Board for its time and service, as well as teachers, coaches and support staff.

Student Vada Headley wrote that she wanted to go back to school. She misses learning and likes reading, she wrote. She added a message directed to her teacher stating that she missed her.

Ten individuals who had attended the meeting in person then provided public comment.

Christy Johnson stated she is concerned that her grandchildren, who are first-graders, will not have a stable start of school this coming year. She asked why school couldn't be started at a minimal risk level, pointing to children already attending daycare together. If the lower risk scenario is selected, she suggested putting siblings on the same school schedule so older siblings could help watch younger siblings during the at home school days. Ms. Johnson also questioned how the district could guarantee that every student receives the education they're entitled to when it is delivered online. Lastly, she asked about assistance for parents regarding the online learning platforms.

Laurie Hodne stated she was concerned and frustrated with the administration and Board. She indicated the Board had approved of a draft plan without knowing its contents, and should have postponed that action. She spoke about her daughter's needs to be academically successful, including the importance of repetition and consistency in practicing skills. Mrs. Hodne said her daughter has regressed in many areas under the distance delivery method. She cited statistics about the lower COVID transmission from children, and commented on the negative impact of children not receiving in person education. Many students with disabilities have needs that are almost impossible to meet with online education, she added. She indicated parents are capable of determining whether it is safe for their children to be in school, and whether they would transmit an illness to others. Additionally, Mrs. Hodne commented on her concern for the well-being of those children who had never taken part in the Zoom options. She asked for clarification as to whether the Smart Start plans to re-open school were based on state mandates, or whether they were guidelines.

Board President Mattson stated that the state's Department of Education and superintendents were having regular meetings regarding school planning; and were all in somewhat of a waiting period to see what would happen with COVID-19. Ms. Mattson said she believed the Smart Start was a recommendation at this point.

Board Member Gubatayao commented on the matrix showing various risk levels which was supplied by DEED for schools to plan re-opening. She added that mandates usually were formulated upon advice from the state health department.

Speaker Nicole Anderson shared her concerns with how online instruction had affected her second-grader. He had struggled with reading, and is now further behind than he would have been without COVID, she said. Ms. Anderson said that even though she has a degree in elementary education, she struggled to help her child. She believes Ketchikan is at a minimal risk level and students should be in school with teachers, learning hands-on. She noted she might have to homeschool as an alternative, and shared how that would be difficult as a full-time worker. Ms. Anderson also commented on her other two children's experiences with the Zoom delivery. Her fifth-grader absorbed them, she said; while her middle-school age child was often one of the few students present for the online classes.

Loreal Linne currently has three students in school - one each attending high school, middle school, and grade school, she said. She stated support for the comments heard that evening, from the letters and at the podium. She advocated for as much in school class time as possible, preferably a minimal risk plan with students attending 100 percent in the classroom. Ms. Linne asked for clarification on the Wednesday schedule in terms of onsite class time. She also asked for more details on the risk levels and what would trigger going to the next level, i.e. would one positive case in Ketchikan put the schools at a different risk level. She added that she appreciated that there would be weekly updates regarding the planning.

Rhea Kahle, the mother of an incoming high school sophomore, said her son had taken advantage of the Florida online opportunity, but did not adapt well to online learning. The screen is not a teacher, and kids need person to person contact, she said. Ms. Kahle said school should start under a minimal risk. If incidences occur necessitating a higher level, then revert back, she said. Ms. Kahle also stated she was appalled to read in a news article that there wasn't a budgetary number yet attached to Ketchikan's school reopening plan.

Taylor Lee read a statement from the Alaska DEED website which described the Smart Start Plan framework as guidance to school districts that is not mandated or state required. School districts have the authority, responsibility and flexibility to be responsive to their communities, she further quoted from the website. Ms. Lee said that the low risk plan is not in the best interest of students or families. For elementary age children going to school only two days a week is pointless, she said. However, if that had to be the plan, she suggested those two days be consecutive. Ms. Lee also questioned proposals to use additional facilities in the community to provide options for kids on the off-site days. She asked how that was different than going to school and would there be help with asynchronous learning at the sites. She also contrasted Ketchikan's plans and situation with that of the Anchorage School District.

Sidney Hartley described the balancing act of parenting, helping with at-home education, and being a student herself. She also commented on the difficulty in trying to fulfill her job working with special needs students. In addition, she couldn't do so online in her home environment without breaking confidentiality, she said. Ms. Hartley stated that the online classes were a short term fix with long-term consequences. She said she thought that class size was the issue that needed to be tackled, especially with the younger age students. Ms. Hartley thanked the Board for caring about those working at home. She suggested the Board and community work on a long-term lasting plan.

Nathaniel Currall introduced himself as a parent of three children in the school district, whose mother had been a teacher in Ketchikan. He also prefaced his comments by thanking teachers, and also thanking the Board for its dedication. The online optional school was a complete failure in his home, he stated, with its lack of grading, expectations, and ending early. He objected to this tack, saying it is the school district's job to educate and Ketchikan students will be behind their peers academically. Mr. Currall objected to plans to begin school later for students and also to the Wednesday schedule. He questioned what the professional development on Wednesdays had accomplished, and whether that had been reported publicly. Regarding the Smart Start Plan, Mr. Currall contended that its approval at a previous Board meeting may have violated the Open Meetings Act. He urged that parents have input into the school planning and determination of risk levels. He also commented that due to some of the schooling scenarios, an argument could be made for parents to choose homeschooling instead.

Christy Willis shared her perspective on moving here recently from Iowa, and wondering about the quality of education her daughter would receive. She noted she had been raised here, and had been employed by a school district in Iowa. Ms. Willis stated that she felt the education level would be awful under what she'd seen proposed for next school year. She mentioned she knew of other states which are planning on normal, full school attendance. She expressed concern with Ketchikan students being competitive in the future.

Laura Munhoven relayed her experiences as a parent dealing with the education delivery as a result of the COVID situation. She became her children's primary educator, she stated, spending money on materials and supplies. She said she was discouraged by the district's policy that no new material would be taught for the remainder of the year; and objected to its approach in stating it was trying to be equitable. Ms. Munhoven said that not doing anything for the remainder was not fair to any of the Ketchikan students or their future. Children need to be in school, learning by doing and not watching screens, she said. She stated support for opening school at 5 days a week with full days, while encouraging good hygiene and staying home if sick. Make the right decision for Ketchikan students, she concluded.

Superintendent Report

Superintendent Beth Lougee referred to her report in the meeting materials. Included was a letter sent to parents the previous Friday. Ms. Lougee said she plans on providing this type of communication every Thursday to keep the community informed. In addition, some town hall type meetings are being considered. Ms. Lougee emphasized that the plan for next school year is evolving, and what it looks like now may be substantially different by August. The commitment is to put forth the best education program based on COVID-19 circumstances at that point.

Superintendent Lougee also noted she'd included information on the plans for a new boiler at Kayhi, with requests for bids currently being advertised. She also had included some historical information on a biomass boiler, as that had been discussed and listed as a capital improvement project in past years. There have been discussions with the Alaska Energy Authority regarding funding sources as well, she said.

Mr. Robbins inquired whether the district was aware of the grants available through the U.S. Forest Service. Ms. Lougee said she met with federal officials regarding those grants in February and indicated the district would apply for the grants when they are available.

Ms. Gubatayao asked the Superintendent the latest guidance from the state health officials in regards to school openings. Superintendent Lougee responded that it continues to emphasize staying six feet apart, practicing good hygiene; and taking temperatures. She offered to send more specific information from the state that is informing the district's planning.

Board member Leslie Becker commented on the Board's action on the draft plan at the last Board meeting. President Mattson said the Board gave guidance on an evolving plan based on the state guidelines as to risk. Ms. Becker asked when the Board would move forward on a final type vote in regards to public questions.

Superintendent Lougee responded that the direction sought at the last meeting provided for teachers to start on the same timeline, but for students to start after Labor Day with a week of orientation. Those dates are what are being publicized, she said.

Ms. Becker followed up by asking for a future report on what had been accomplished by the early release times on Wednesday for professional development. She also requested information on the possibility of adding lost students days from this academic calendar back into the calendar.

Ms. Gubatayao asked if the summer lunch program had been allowed to continue at more than one school site. Superintendent Lougee answered that waivers allowing that had been received, so the lunch program offered in response to the COVID school closures, will continue.

Mr. Robbins Jr. suggested looking into using CARES Act funds to pay teachers to start two weeks earlier than the approved school schedule, rather than students missing school days by starting later.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion to approve the Consent Calendar of June 10, 2020

- a. *Motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of May 27, 2020.*
- b. *Motion to approve a contract with Robert Hewitt as district wide administrator and teacher mentor for the 2020-2021 school year.*
- c. *Motion to approve a contract with Katherine Walter for occupational therapy services for the 2020-2021 school year.*
- d. *Motion to approve a contract with Cailin Silcox for occupational therapy services for the 2020-2021 school year.*
- e. *Motion to approve a contract with Lindsey Hargis for speech pathology services for the 2020-2021 school year.*
- f. *Motion to approve a contract with Sheri Adams for speech pathology services for the 2020-2021 school year.*

Moved by: GUBATAYAO; Second by: HEUTTE

ROLL CALL

**HEUTTE, SKAN, GUBATAYAO, BECKER, ROBBINS JR., TABB, MATTSON – ALL AYES
MOTION PASSED**

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to ratify the 2020-2023 Negotiated Labor Contract between KGBSD and IBEW.

Moved by: TABB; Second by: GUBATAYAO

Discussion

Ms. Gubatayao noted that a reference to the director of buildings and grounds was replaced in the contract language, and asked if that meant there was no one in that position. This was confirmed by Superintendent Lougee. Ms. Gubatayao also asked a question in reference to disciplinary documents. Ms. Lougee said that the district does keep documents related to discipline in its personnel files in the human resources department.

ROLL CALL

**TABB, GUBATAYAO, HEUTTE, SKAN, ROBBINS JR., BECKER, MATTSON – ALL AYES
MOTION PASSED**

Motion to approve the one-year contract extension with First Student for the 2020-2021 school year, as presented.

Moved by: ROBBINS JR; Second by: HEUTTE

Discussion

There was no discussion.

ROLL CALL

**BECKER, GUBATAYAO, HEUTTE, TABB, ROBBINS JR., SKAN, MATTSON – ALL AYES
MOTION PASSED**

DISCUSSION

Special Education Task Force: Task Force member Jordan Tabb reported in its two meetings so far the group has been identifying trends, prevalent concerns, and goals for special education, and re-envisioning what services may look like. The group has 22 stakeholders. Ms. Gubatayao suggested using input from students. Mr. Tabb said he'd defer to administration, but ensuring student confidentiality might be an issue.

Advisory Committee dates for 2020-2021 (Safety, Transportation, Calendar, Insurance, and Wellness). Meeting dates for these advisory committees and Board member representatives were provided. The intent is for each committee to meet once per quarter.

CITIZEN REMARKS

Ms. Hodne expressed appreciation for the suggestion to include special education students' input for the Special Education Task Force. She noted it was a way to support and empower students as they're getting ready to transition out.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Jordan Tabb responded to some of the concerns he'd heard expressed recently. The district is sailing uncharted waters in trying to provide a quality education during a global pandemic with no playbook, he said; except to rely on educational and medical experts. He said it is a misunderstanding that if the district uses blended learning or distance learning, students will not be required to participate. He differentiated the crisis model which occurred at the end of this school year with what will occur in the fall, and for which teachers have been training. Students will be engaged and learning, he said. In addition, he objected to the idea that teachers will be "off" on Wednesdays and addressed the importance of their professional development. He called the work that teachers will be taking on as "herculean." Mr. Tabb also shared the concern about elementary-aged children on days they might be schooling at home, and noted the ongoing discussions and planning for off-site learning options. Lastly, he stated that if social distancing guidelines put in place to manage safety in schools are ignored, those classrooms will not be safe for anyone.

Mr. Robbins expressed appreciation to parents for showing up and wanting to be involved in the process. He said it was disappointed that some had felt left out in the decision making, and implored Superintendent Lougee and her staff to take this into account. The June 4th communique from the Superintendent was important, he added, and helpful in answering questions being asked in the community. Mr. Robbins said he was glad to know the school planning will be consistently looked at with Ketchikan's reality in mind. He stated that if Ketchikan's circumstances continue to indicate low risk, school should re-open at a minimum risk level.

Ms. Gubatayao also stated her thanks to all the persons who had written letters and commented that evening. She noted her own experience watching her grandchildren on the Zoom meetings, and watching how teachers worked to keep them engaged, noting that her own daughter is a teacher. Ms. Gubatayao also said she wanted to acknowledge what had been occurring in the country with the demonstrations around social justice and racial justice. She said she had married interracially and her family has endured certain things. She referred to the miniscule percentage of one's DNA that determines race; and asked when people were going to look at commonalities instead of differences. Be the change you want to see, she stated in conclusion.

Board Member Tom Heutte expressed empathy with the challenge of working families with young students, stating he's been reflecting on that daily. He commented on the approval of the draft plan for reopening school, stating it was important to get it out as soon as possible. Mr. Heutte also remarked on the difficulty in making good decisions when information on the virus is sketchy and changing, and the pandemic's direction is uncertain. He ended his comments by stating that: these are times that try men's souls, and we're all in this together and we're all on an island together.

Board Member Skan thanked those who had spoken that night. She said she understands homeschooling while having to work and that those are valid concerns. She stated that the speakers' comments have been heard and the Board also wants what is best for children. She said she had participated in the meeting via teleconference as she just flew in to Ketchikan from Anchorage, and didn't want to expose anyone to any potential germs she may have brought with her. She commented on the number of positive coronavirus cases in Anchorage, and noted that some of those individuals are young. Ketchikan may not look the same as other areas, she said. She thanked the Superintendent for her work and in moving forward on planning.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Administrative Assistants

Motion to enter an Executive Session for an update on negotiations with the Administrative Assistants, a matter the immediate knowledge of which would clearly have an adverse effect upon the finances of the school district.

Moved by: HEUTTE; Second by: ROBBINS JR.

ROLL CALL

ROBBINS JR., BECKER, HEUTTE, SKAN, TAB, GUBATAYAO, MATTSON – ALL AYES

MOTION PASSED

The Board entered the executive session at 8:12 p.m. The executive session ended at 8:28 p.m. and the Board resumed its regular session. Board President Mattson said no action was taken, but direction was given.

ADJOURNMENT

After the date of the next School Board meeting was noted, a motion was made and seconded for adjournment. With no objection, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Meetings approved as distributed at the June 24, 2020 regular meeting of the Board of Education.

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD
Bridget Mattson