

Plans for the 2021-22 School Year

Wissahickon Board of School Directors
Special Public Meeting
July 12, 2021



7/12/21

Introduction

Purpose of tonight's meeting

- ▶ Recommendations for the 2021-22 school year
 - ▶ *Recommended Health & Safety Plan*
 - ▶ *Recommended Instructional Plan*
- ▶ No voting tonight (that takes place on 7/19/21)

What did we learn?

What did we learn over the past 18 months?

- ▶ Flexibility is key (need to be able/willing to pivot quickly)
- ▶ Teaching virtual & in-person students at same time: Not great
- ▶ Virtual teaching & learning: Doable (in a pinch)
- ▶ In-person teaching & learning: Ideal

Governing Agencies Update

- ▶ **Federal level (CDC)**—*Important update on 7/9/21 for re-opening of schools* (e.g., in-person instruction a priority, masking recommended for those not vaccinated, etc.)

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html

- ▶ **State level (PADOE, PADOH)**—previously indicated a desire to be in lock step w/ CDC (but still "reviewing" recent 7/9/21 CDC update)
- ▶ **County level (Montco OPH)**—so far, a focus on micro-level reporting/quarantining procedure matters
- ▶ **Common theme? Decisions are left to the district in 2021-22**

Medical/Science Update

- ▶ Expert opinions vary (masks, variants, etc.)
- ▶ Long-term impact of COVID-19 on children not known
- ▶ Vaccine most likely approved for children under age 12 in Oct/Nov 2021

Survey Results—Grades K-5

- ▶ Survey window open 6/9/21 to 6/17/21
- ▶ 1,927 responses (83% response rate—very high)
- ▶ Three questions:
 1. “For the 2021-22 school year, what is your preference for requiring mask-wearing indoors until a vaccine is available to K-5 students?”
 2. “If we DO require masks to be worn indoors at the K-5 level until a vaccine is available, which instructional model would you choose for your child?”
 3. “If we do NOT require masks to be worn indoors at the K-5 level, which instructional model would you choose for your child?”

NOTE: Responses were very similar across all six grade levels

Survey Results—Grades K-5 (cont.)

Question #1: Preference for requiring masks in general

| <u>No Preference</u> | | <u>Masks Required</u> | | <u>Masks Optional</u> | | <u>Total</u> |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|--------------|
| 91 | 4.72% | 979 | 50.80% | 857 | 44.47% | 1927 |

Question #2: If masks required, mode of instruction chosen

| <u>In-Person</u> | | <u>Virtual</u> | | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------|--------|----------------|-------|--------------|
| 1873 | 97.20% | 54 | 2.80% | 1927 |

Question #3: If masks NOT required, mode of instruction chosen

| <u>In-Person</u> | | <u>Virtual</u> | | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------|--------|----------------|--------|--------------|
| 1584 | 82.20% | 343 | 17.80% | 1927 |

Survey Results—Grade 6

- ▶ Survey window open 6/11/21 to 6/18/21
- ▶ 284 responses (79% response rate—also very high)
- ▶ Three questions:
 1. “If we DO require masks to be worn at ALL times indoors and by ALL Middle School students until a vaccine is available, which instructional model would you choose for your child?”
 2. “If we DO require masks to be worn indoors and ONLY while in a classroom and ONLY by students in Grade 6 until a vaccine is available, which instructional model would you choose for your child?”
 3. “If we do NOT require masks to be worn indoors by students in Grade 6, which instructional model would you choose for your child?”

Survey Results—Grade 6 (cont.)

Question #1: Masks required of ALL Middle School students

| <u>In-Person</u> | | <u>Virtual</u> | | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------|--------|----------------|-------|--------------|
| 273 | 96.13% | 11 | 3.87% | 284 |

Question #2: Masks required of only Grade 6 students (& in classrooms only)

| <u>In-Person</u> | | <u>Virtual</u> | | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------|--------|----------------|-------|--------------|
| 262 | 92.25% | 22 | 7.75% | 284 |

Question #3: Masks NOT required of Grade 6 (or any) Middle School students

| <u>In-Person</u> | | <u>Virtual</u> | | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------|--------|----------------|--------|--------------|
| 222 | 78.17% | 62 | 21.83% | 284 |

Health & Safety Plan

- ▶ State-required template
- ▶ Similar general mitigation topics as the plan for 2020-21 (face coverings, distancing, etc.)
- ▶ Must review the plan “every six months or whenever there are significant changes to the CDC recommendations for K-12 schools”

Health & Safety Plan (cont.)

Main tenets of plan:

▶ Masks*

- ❖ **Grades K-5:** Required, indoors only, for students & adults until January**
- ❖ **Grade 6:** Required, in Grade 6 classrooms only, for students & adults until January**
- ❖ **Grades 7-12:** Optional
- ❖ **Rationale:** 289 more students in-person in Grades K-5 matters (as does 40 more students in Grade 6)

*Face shields are an acceptable alternative for adults when teaching

**Presuming a vaccine is available by January and no unforeseen COVID-19 developments/agency requirements

Health & Safety Plan (cont.)

Main tenets of plan (cont.):

- ▶ **Distancing**—back to “normal” with an eye towards maximizing distancing to the greatest extent possible (e.g, at lunch)
- ▶ **Hygiene/Cleaning**—maintain reminders/training and established sanitizing procedures
- ▶ **Contact Tracing**—follow MCOPH guidance
- ▶ **Vaccines**—do NOT require (unless directed otherwise by a governing agency)

Instructional Plan

- ▶ In-person instruction, five days per week
- ▶ Virtual option (K-12) via the Wissahickon Virtual Academy, featuring asynchronous instruction, w/ synchronous supports, provided by the MCIU
- ▶ Parents will choose which option no later than 7/30/21, & have one opportunity to change (in Jan 2022, presuming vaccine is available by then)

Instructional Plan (cont.)

- ▶ Other options were considered (e.g., some K-5 classrooms w/ masks and some not, virtual option w/ WSD teachers, more frequent options to change, etc.)
- ▶ District will be ready to pivot to either “hybrid” or “100% virtual” approach should it be required
- ▶ Interscholastic athletics will fully resume (w/ basic, recommended mitigation practices in place)

Guiding Principles

What principles drove the recommendation?

- ▶ *We want as many students in school as possible*
- ▶ **329 more students in school matters; we considered this to be a primary consideration**
- ▶ Finding a common ground matters

Moving Forward

- ▶ **7/19/21:** Special public Board meeting to vote on both plans
- ▶ **7/30/21:** Deadline for families to choose virtual option
- ▶ **August 2021:** Finalize staffing needs
- ▶ **8/30/21:** First day of school

Conclusion

- ▶ We pledge to communicate as often and comprehensively as we can
- ▶ We acknowledge the fact that not everybody will agree with every decision—we have sought a compromise approach when possible/ appropriate; sometimes people agree with the outcome, and sometimes they don't
- ▶ We believe in the need to find common ground