

BETTENDORF COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BETTENDORF, IOWA

Unofficial Minutes of the January 4, 2021, Regular Meeting
of the Board of Education
(pending Board approval)

1. Call to Order.

The Board of Directors of the Bettendorf Community School District, in the County of Scott, State of Iowa, met in open session according to Iowa law for their regular Board meeting at the Administration Center, 3311 18th Street, Bettendorf, Iowa, on January 4, 2021. President Rebecca Eastman called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and the Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Colleen Skolrood, Board Secretary, verified that the meeting notice had been posted and mailed to the media as required by law.

Members present: Directors Castro*, Champion, Doerder, Eastman, Holland, Lynch

Members absent: Director Pyevich

Other officials present: Dr. Michelle Morse, Superintendent; Brietta Collier, Director of Finance; Jill Matherly, Director of Human Resources; Celeste Miller, Director of Communications; Curt Pratt, Director of Operations; David Farmer, Treasurer; Mary Heeringa, BEA Representative; Melissa Laufenberg, BESA Representative; Ethan Geifman, Student Representative; Colleen Skolrood, Board Secretary.

*present via Zoom

2. Approve the Agenda.

Motion by Director Holland, seconded by Director Lynch, to approve the agenda as presented.

Ayes: 6 Directors Castro, Champion, Doerder, Eastman, Holland, Lynch

Nays: 0

Absent: 1 Director Pyevich

Motion carried 6-0-1

3. Communication.

3.01 **President's Statement.** Any member of the audience may address the board with comments about items of interest or concern. Please state your name and address and please limit your comments to three minutes. Iowa law prohibits discussing specific employees or their job performance. Please refer to policy 213.E1 - Public Input At Board Meetings.

President Eastman read the following letters that were e-mailed to Celeste Miller:

My wife and I have 4 children enrolled in the Bettendorf Community School District both at the High School and at Hoover Elementary.

We wanted to take a moment to share our continued request of full time in-person education for our children. Throughout this entire pandemic we've been told to "trust the science" and the experts in their respective fields with what is and is not appropriate. Yet despite the CDC, Dr. Fauci and many other government experts we still do not have our schools fully open at BCSD. I travel on a weekly basis for work and airlines, airports and

hotels have all implemented the same mitigation measures that schools have – and if 75 plus individuals can sit in an airplane together, why can't 20 plus students sit in a classroom? It defies logic!

I shared with the board prior to the start of the school year that my wife and I had our main concerns resting on our youngest who is special needs and in kindergarten at Hoover, and while those concerns are still paramount – we are seeing the negative effects of online education with our other kiddos as well.

Frankly, the mental health and social detriment that online or even hybrid education is having on our young generation is simply unacceptable – yet we readily accept it or even hail it as the best option. At this point – there is no option that doesn't involve risk and we've been experimenting with our kids education long enough.

In my opinion educators are “essential workers” much like those in the healthcare, law enforcement, fire department and even the grocery store employees. If a nurse chooses and I emphasize “chooses” not to practice during this time – they don't have a remote option, therefore they either choose to be unemployed or they find another position. Law Enforcement doesn't do virtual arrests or traffic stops! These are all essential to our everyday lives; so too is our kids education. While BCSD may still be offering a FREE education – it is no way near APPROPRIATE. My family and I LOVE the teachers at BCSD and have developed great relationships with many of them and have no doubt in their desire to help shape our kids future. However, the time has come to call them essential workers – we MUST get back to in person education. The very future of the public school system is at stake. I have no doubt that one of the consequences of this pandemic will be the reduction in enrollment for our public school systems across the country. Less students – less need for teachers! If in-person learning isn't a priority then our family and I'm sure others will seek alternate options.

Thank you!
David & Melissa Fuglseth
3060 Willow Drive, Bettendorf

Good Evening,
I'm sharing with you today to strongly encourage you to facilitate the return of the youngest elementary students to 100% in-school learning at the earliest possible date (January or February). Last month the board voted down such a motion by a vote of 4-3. The dissenting votes cast were in support of teachers who voiced safety concerns of returning to full numbers.

I want to begin by saying how much I deeply value everyone's concerns, opinions and perspectives. Good decision-making is the final product of dissenting views and impartial reasoning. With respect to the discussion at last month's meeting, I believe that there are a greater number of teachers favoring elementary age children to returning 100% in-person than opposing. I've spoken to several teachers who neither want to be named nor speak out on the matter publicly but whole-heartedly support full in-person return-to-learn. This is a very sensitive and personal topic for everyone and therefore speaking out one way or the other can cause a stigma of animosity amongst teachers, staff and parents alike. The unity of our teachers, parents and community is essential to our children in having a harmonious and productive learning environment. Many are afraid that speaking

up will disrupt that balance.

In fact, I had originally hoped to present this to you all on behalf of a united front of district elementary PTAs, but when the idea was proposed no one wanted to participate because they didn't want to "appear" as political or unsupportive of the teachers. Only in 2020 is safety a partisan issue. That is not the goal here, and why I felt strongly enough to continue to create the online petition and submit this statement to you as an individual parent, community member and teacher supporter.

I have included a link to an online petition I created through the change.org website and shared online publicly via Facebook. My goal was simply to give a platform for anyone in our community to voice their support of 100% return-to-learn with a priority on the youngest children. My only regret is that as an individual, and in a limited contact environment, I don't have a better method to reach all parents in our district to offer them this opportunity. You'll see the petition has been signed by well over 350 individuals in less than a month's time with over 5,000 views and 33 shares—30 in Bettendorf and 29 from the surrounding QCA.

Please link to and read the petition at this time. Attached are PDF versions of the petition text and list of signatures. <https://www.change.org/p/bettendorf-school-district-board-of-directors-bettendorf-district-elementary-ptas-support-in-person-k-6-return-to-learn> or <http://chnng.it/8L8MdvKh>

This past year has been particularly stressful for everyone with racial and political discord on top of the anxieties associated with the global pandemic. The topic is not simply one side vs another (parents vs teachers, right vs left, etc.) and dispelling such a one-dimensional notion can help us get to addressing the root issue. We are all suffering - -but our top responsibility as parents, teachers, staff, board and community members must be for the growth and education of the children of our district. The largest concern is for the youngest children with the greatest degree of displacement/trauma. The academic issues are core, but not as crucial as the critical emotional, social and developmental components learned in the elementary and especially K-2 grades. This is compounded in the case of district's special needs, at-risk and low-income children missing out on meals, adult interaction, daily support, caregiving, health care, etc. by not being in school full time.

We have an obligation to those children. All lives and safety are important and therefore we need to get our children back full-time in the safest way possible for everyone. I personally, kept my children home for 100% online learning in Q1 because I was scared for the safety of both my family and the teachers and staff. After Q1 and seeing the numbers and the safety mitigation efforts working successfully, I felt comfortable enough to return them to hybrid in Q2. I feel comfortable now returning them to 100% with ongoing safety measures in Q3 or earlier if possible. I do not take this lightly as I am high risk as a breast cancer survivor with other health risks. Yes, the social distancing will be a challenge with full class numbers, but I believe in the innovative ideas and ingenuity our school administrations have done and will continue to do to keep everyone as safe as possible. It is also the responsibility of all of us as community members to be safe in our everyday lives to keep both the kids and teachers safe and to encourage other community members to do the same. I have found it challenging and feel the same covid fatigue as

everyone else but continue to maintain a safe “bubble” and get frustrated when I see so many out and about flaunting the social distancing and mask guidelines. I must remind myself daily I am making the right, responsible choice for my family and community and this too shall pass. We cannot control or force others, but we can set a good and safe example.

I also have to believe that the board and district administration can find temporary accommodations for those teachers and staff who are high risk or fearful of being in full classrooms. The teachers needed for the online academy, for instance, would still be at a safe proximity as is their preference.

Soon enough the vaccine will be available for teachers which can help all students return-to-learn 100% in person, but until that time we need to bridge the gap by getting our youngest students lacking in social and emotional support back in their classrooms full-time.

In closing, I pray that you all can for a moment put aside thinking of voters before those who you took an oath to support the care, education and administration for –which is both students and educators. I also hope you appreciate in your decision the large amount of people who are in support of this measure, but afraid to speak up for fear of judgement or retribution.

I thank you for your time, consideration and all that you do for our children, teachers, staff and district.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carrie Fuhr
Bettendorf resident, mother of 2 Grant Wood students

3.02 **Board Shared Communication.** Director Lynch wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Director Holland said we talk a lot about safety and said that it actually starts before the kids get to school. He reminded everyone that students cannot get to school safely if there is not a safe route. He gave a shout out to the Bettendorf Fire Department for getting out and opening up a crosswalk at one of our elementary schools. He said it was great to see them pitching in, but the reality is they should not have had to do it. He reminded everyone that we have policies in place to make sure kids have safe routes to school.

Director Castro noted January 9th is National Police Law Enforcement Day. He thinks it would be appropriate and fitting if our district found a way to honor our people in blue who keep our schools and cities safe.

3.03 **Superintendent’s Report.** Dr. Morse said they are excited to have students and staff back after winter break. She thanked Curt Pratt and our Operations team for all the time they put in and work they did over winter break so that our schools were ready for us to return to school today. As Director Castro just mentioned, Dr. Morse also thanked our school resource officers and security teams at our different sites. They are an integral part to the work that we do. Their efforts do not go unnoticed and are greatly appreciated.

At our January 10, 2021 board meeting we will be holding a public hearing on the 2021-2022 calendar. The district calendar committee has been working since October on a draft. They started with four versions. Staff on the committee has been working with their colleagues at their school sites to gather additional input.

- 3.04 **Director of Finance Report.** Brie Collier had nothing to share at this time.
- 3.05 **BEA Report.** Mary Heeringa said it was great to be back today. She will have more to talk about at the next meeting after their BEA and Round Table meetings.
- 3.06 **BESA Report.** Melissa Laufenberg said it was great to be back today. Their next meeting is Monday, January 11. She pointed out that they currently have six paraeducators openings. She encouraged anyone who might be interested to apply.
- 3.07 **Student Board Representative's Report.** Ethan Geifman wished everyone a Happy 2021. Student Council will be hosting a fundraiser for Suicide Awareness and Prevention on January 6 at Pancheros.

He thanked the Bettendorf Community Schools Foundation for providing PRIDE Time in the evenings. It is available on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7:30-9:00 pm.

- 3.08 **Patrick Hurd Participated in "Summit for a More Equitable and Just Tomorrow."** Patrick Hurd, a junior at Bettendorf High School, was one of 13 students across the nation selected to participate in "Summit for a More Equitable and Just Tomorrow" on December 8th, a collaboration of CNBC and Junior Achievement. Hurd, along with the other students, asked questions related to the topic. The panelists offered simple, straightforward strategies to help empower participants to strive toward promoting a more equitable and just tomorrow.
- 3.09 **BHS Goldusters Earn Awards in ISDTA Competition.** All 6 BHS soloists received Division I placements at the recent Iowa State Dance and Drill Team Association State virtual solo championship. Congratulations to: Jenna Wingate, Emma Stiener, Norah Dunn, Emma Kerr, AbbyClare Goche, Rachel Redden. Redden also received 8th place in Division IX solos The Goldusters took home 5th place in Class VI Jazz and 2nd place in Class XII Pom. Congratulations the Goldusters and Coach Stiener and Coach Wells.

4. Consent Agenda.

Motion by Director Holland, seconded by Director Lynch, to approve the consent agenda as printed.

Ayes: 6 Directors Champion, Doerder, Eastman, Holland, Lynch, Castro
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 Director Pyevich
Motion carried 6-0-1

- 4.01 Approval of December 7, 2020 Regular Board Meeting Minutes
4.02 Approval of January 4, 2020 Bills Recommended for Payment
4.03 Approval of Administrative Recommendations – Personnel
Certified Approval to Hire

Lindsey Jimenez/BHS/Special Education/1.0 FTE/BA,0/\$19,966 prorated from 1/5/2021/Pending licensure and verification/Replacing Carrie Toppert/Effective January 5th, 2021

Schedule D Approval to Hire

Fenner Hengst/BMS/7th and 8th Grade Girls Swim Coach/\$2,867/Replacing Melissa Johnson/Effective 2020-2021 school year

4.04 Approval of 2nd Quarter Early Graduate – Addition: Kamdon Block

4.05 Approval of the tuition applications, two from Davenport, IA, and one from Silvis, IL student

5. Informational/Action Items.

5.01 **Financial Update, Tax Rate History and FY22 Initial Budget Planning.** Brie Collier shared information with directors to frame the development of next year's budget. She reviewed the prior year (FY20) fiscal health.

Ms. Collier reviewed historical and projected property tax rates and enrollment trends. The district is down 100 students this year. Dr. Morse noted that the state is seeing declines overall, even in districts that have previously seen growth.

Ms. Collier discussed aligning district goals and priorities with resources.

- Set financial health goals
 - She recommends 15% -20% UAB and Solvency Ratios
- Salaries/Benefits aligned to district vision. The district is currently at 82%, which is a little high.
 - She recommends 78% -80% of total General Fund by FY2022
- Maintain steady tax levy rate
- Long-range planning. Dr. Morse noted they are already having conversations about long-range planning. The goal is to be proactive and not reactive.

President Eastman discussed looking at a third party audit to look at district staffing levels. Some directors agreed, but others were against an outside consultant telling the district what we already know.

5.02 **November Financials.** Brie Collier presented monthly financial report for November 2020. Through November, General fund revenue totaled \$ \$17,827,141 and expenses totaled \$14,529,430. The fund balance in the General Fund at November 30, 2020 was \$15,202,047.

The following was noted: General Fund Revenues are up over the same period last year. State revenue is up due to increased State Aid. The Federal revenue is up due to ESSER/GEER money.

General Fund expenditures are up over the same period last year. Purchased Services are up due to software purchases, which have increased with COVID learning needs.

The Activity Fund is running roughly the same surplus balance as the same time last year. Although Management Fund is operating at a deficit spending level, this is by design and incorporates the prior-year Early Retirement package payout. Our Self Insurance fund is currently running a surplus, which is a change from prior years. We continue to monitor

expenses and have seen a decrease in high cost claims and procedures due to COVID closures. Food Service Fund continues to be monitored.

Our overall cash position is up from the same period last year. This is the first time this fiscal year that our cash position has been stronger in a month than the prior year comparison. This is mostly due to Debt Service transfers to meet interest payments in January and July.

Motion by Director Holland, seconded by Director Champion, to approve the November 2020 financials as presented.

Ayes: 6 Directors Doerder, Eastman, Holland, Lynch, Castro, Champion
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 Director Pyevich
Motion carried 6-0-1

- 5.03 **Approve At-Risk MSA Request.** Brie Collier noted this is the official request for the Modified Supplemental Amount (MSA).

Motion by Director Holland, seconded by Director Lynch, to approve the maximum MSA of \$1,329,996 to support the 2021/22 Board approved At Risk program.

Ayes: 6 Directors Eastman, Holland, Lynch, Castro, Champion, Doerder
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 Director Pyevich
Motion carried 6-0-1

- 5.04 **Approve Revenue Purpose Statement.** The Revenue Purpose Statement simply defines how the SAVE revenue is to be used by the district. It will not increase property tax.

Motion by Director Holland, seconded by Director Lynch, to approve the Revenue Purpose Statement ordering an election on a Revenue Purpose Statement to authorize expenditures from revenue received from the State Secure an Advanced Vision for Education Fund, and ordering the publication of notice.

Ayes: 6 Directors Holland, Lynch, Castro, Champion, Doerder, Eastman
Nays: 0
Absent: 1 Director Pyevich
Motion carried 6-0-1

- 5.05 **Return to Learn Update.** Since our last meeting, we had one week left before we departed for winter break. Dr. Morse has been working with leadership and leadership has been working with their site staff. They have been looking at how we return 100% in person while keeping our mitigation strategies in place. One of those challenges, even if we loosen some of the social distancing guidelines, is how do we navigate lunch. They have looked at using expanded spaces, but the piece that comes into play is the additional supervision, which requires additional adults. We have to make sure we maintain contractual obligations. They are looking at all options and thinking outside of the box.

Dr. Morse has not received any more information on when educators will be able to

receive the vaccination. She had heard that it could be potentially mid-February. President Eastman said we need some real ideas because this is complex and challenging. She encouraged all those with ideas/solutions to bring them forward.

6. Future Events and Informational Items.

- January 19, 2021, Public Hearing for 2021-2022 Calendar
- January 19, 2021, BOE meeting, 6:00 pm
- January 25, 2021 BOE Work Session, 6:00 pm
- February 1, 2021, BOE meeting, 6:00 pm
- February 16, 2021, BOE meeting, 6:00 pm
- March 1, 2021, BOE meeting, 6:00 pm
- March 22, 2021, BOE meeting, 6:00 pm

7. Adjournment.

Director Holland motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Rebecca Eastman, President

ATTEST:

Colleen Skolrood, Secretary