

July 7, 2020

Good afternoon President Raymond, Superintendent McNeill and WCSD Board of Trustees,

The WEA has many concerns regarding the reopening plan being presented to the WCSD Board of Trustees (BOT). Some of the concerns have been expressed throughout the reopening committee and sub-committee process, while many, many concerns and questions have come up since the recommended plan was submitted last Thursday. There has been a high level of stress and anxiety expressed by our members (who are both employees of WCSD and parents of WCSD students) regarding the plan.

One of the greatest concerns of the WEA and its members is safety. As the number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase in Washoe County, there is apprehension as to whether it is safe to go back to school within the proposed timeline. Notwithstanding all the safety procedures WCSD implements (PPE, self-temperature checks, face coverings, extra cleaning, etc.), all educators working at a school will be exposed to a work environment with medium risks, an environment wherein all educators could contract COVID-19, and an environment that may not be in accordance with the safety provisions of the WEA/WCSD Agreement. In the power point presentation for tonight's BOT Meeting, it states "No single health and safety measure in isolation will effectively mitigate the spread of COVID-19." This risk applies to all educators, not only to educators who have compromised health systems.

As an association, we understand there is a responsibility to balance the needs of our community, parents, and students by reopening schools, with the health and safety needs of our educators. One way WCSD can balance these needs is by providing options to our educators. We believe there will be educators who wish to return to work in a traditional setting, and educators who wish to work in a distance learning format. Based on this, the WEA is requesting the following options be provided to all educators:

- First, any educator wanting to take a non-paid leave of absence, due to concerns arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, be approved for a non-paid leave of absence for this school year; and
- Second, any educator wanting to work in a distance learning environment, due to concerns with contracting COVID-19, be given the option of working in a distance learning position.

We understand providing these options will be a challenge, but we also believe it is important educators be provided these options in order to ensure their safety. Our educators deserve this respect as professionals and as valued employees of WCSD.

The remaining concerns/requests which need to be addressed include:

- Special ESIP (Early Separation Incentive Program) offered to educators;
- Impact on personal sick leave due to remaining home for COVID-19 symptoms or for being quarantined (employees should not have days deducted for this sick leave use);
- Impact on contract hours due to modification of expectations/positions (we are concerned educators will be required to significantly work beyond the contract hours due to this restructuring of positions);
- Protection of prep time and duty free lunch;
- Adherence to reassignment section of the contract for educators reassigned in a school;
- Deep cleaning of the workspace being added to the certified educators' responsibilities;
- Certified educators opting out of special cleaning requirements due to safety concerns;
- Notification/procedures of possible COVID-19 exposure (responsibility of the employee to report; responsibility of the employer to report to other employees must be clearly defined in writing);
- Formalized process of filing concerns around safety expectations not being followed at the school site;

- Face coverings/masks for students under 9 be required, with the exception for health reasons (educators and staff of students ages younger than 9 are more at risk for exposure due to this age group of students not being required to wear a mask);
- TIME – we need the paid TIME to plan, to grade, to contact parents, to do the work behind the scenes when students are not in the classroom; and
- Respect for the professional expectations of all educators, including our Special Ed teachers, SLPs, counselors, nurses, specialized teachers (such as music, GT, EL), when it comes to work away for the students.

Some of the questions we have include:

- What happens if a COVID-19 exposure occurs at a school? There should be written procedures.
- What is the case load or total number of students expected in each model for the classroom teacher, for the counselor, etc.? Our concern is the case load will increase when combining the distance learning and the “in person” learning, could this translate into 20 students in group one and 20 students in group two (which is a significant increase from the current class size/case load)?
- What is the balance between the distance learning/in person learning and the time to develop these lessons?
- What is the expectation at the secondary level for the “distance learning” day?
- When setting up the classroom at the ES, how will the social distancing requirements of 6 feet apart be complied with? Will consideration of “high traffic areas” in a classroom (such as restrooms) be considered?
- How will our EL, Music Teachers, GT teachers, and other specialized educators be utilized? We are concerned about specialized educators and itinerant educators who travel to multiple sites being overscheduled.
- Will there be consideration of the expectations placed on our Special Ed Educators (including SLPs) when considering caseloads and other professional responsibilities?
- What technology help (whether equipment or concerns around connectivity) will be offered to staff? We are also very concerned about student needs for technology.
- What support/training will be provided to specialized educators who are assigned to teach in other areas? In a related sense, will there be license issues for the educators?
- What is meant by “extra deep cleaning”, and what impact will it have on educators, particularly on their time? If students are eating in the classroom, what is the procedure for cleaning? Will this be the responsibility of the classroom educator?
- Will the WCSD BOT/WCSD Committee meetings be held in person when schools resume in August?

We recognize the final decision will be difficult.

Thank you for your consideration,

Natha Anderson,
President, WEA

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