

Minutes of the August 12, 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting Southwest Leadership Academy

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING SOUTHWEST LEADERSHIP ACADEMY GOVERNING BOARD

Pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) 38-431.02, notice was given to the public that the Governing Board for Southwest Leadership Academy will hold a meeting open to the public as specified below. The Board reserves the right to change the order of items on the agenda. One or more Board members may participate telephonically. The meeting will take place at Southwest Leadership Academy 4301 West Fillmore Street, Phoenix, AZ 85043.

The notice of the meeting was posted on August 11, 2020.

1. Board President Mike Gantt called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM (MST). Other board members present were Brian Heath (Secretary/Treasurer), Terry Hines, Ruben Olivas, and Drew Ainsworth.
2. Introduction of Visitors: Dr. Greg Fowler (Principal), Dr. Philip Geiger (Superintendent), and Nancey Carter (Compliance Officer)
3. **Further Review of Arizona Department of Health Guidelines for Reopening School, A Report from the CDC, and the Arizona Department of Health –** Members of the Board have expressed further concern about reopening of school in person currently scheduled and authorized for August 17, 2020. As the Board has reviewed the guidance from the Arizona Department of Health, the fact that Maricopa County has not yet met the benchmarks for reopening the Board wishes to reconsider its vote of May 10, 2020, regarding the start date for in-person instruction.

President Gantt said that upon reflection of the decision made to reopen school at the August 10th meeting that warranted further discussion and review by the Board. Mr. Heath made a similar comment stating that wanted to be sure that the teaching staff was safe knowing some students will likely come to school infected. He said that even at Monday's meeting he still had some concerns when the vote was taken but did not express them.

Minutes of the August 12, 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting Southwest Leadership Academy

Mr. Heath spoke about the SLA faculty meeting he attended today and how committed the staff was in getting students back in school, but their consensus was to pause re-opening in person for at least another two weeks. Dr. Fowler confirmed the ambivalent feelings of the staff and commended them on their concern for the education of our students.

President Gantt asked each board member to comment. Mrs. Hines stated that she continued to be concerned about reopening Monday, August 17th, and was in favor of delaying the opening. Mrs. Hines also shared a liability waiver that is being used in Queen Creek USD but Dr. Geiger said that the administration had already put out a liability form and would not want to further confuse families by sending another one. Dr. Geiger said that unless the Board had concerns over the one currently being used; he would prefer to continue to use that one.

Mr. Ainsworth indicated that he would prefer students to attend school in person starting August 17, 2020, but also felt that the school should not be the first to do so and that we could learn from those schools that preceded SLA. In in-person reopening. Therefore, he was in favor of delaying in-person programming for two weeks to Tuesday, September 8th (September 7th is an observed holiday). Dr. Geiger commented that several school districts will open on August 17th including Queen Creek USD, JO Combs USD, EVIT, and ALA charter schools.

Mr. Olivas said that felt that we were putting our students into an unnecessary risk by returning August 17th and wanted to postpone re-opening.

Mr. Heath said that he learned some things from the SLA faculty today that need to be answered before we re-open. Since most of our students come to school by public transportation, he noted that the buses will only permit 10 riders at a time now meaning our students may have to wait extended periods in extreme heat waiting for a bus that could accommodate them. He also felt that there needed to be a better contingency plan if teachers become ill and a specific, written plan for when students are exposed to someone who tests positive. He said the majority of the staff were unsettled about returning to in-

Minutes of the August 12, 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting Southwest Leadership Academy

person education but that at this time he feels the school should pause at least until September 8th at which time the board could review the statistics again.

Dr. Fowler echoed the comments about the faculty meeting made by Mr. Heath and said that if the Board decided to postpone opening in-person to September 8th, he and his staff would be busy this week issuing Chromebooks, logins, websites, and schedules for remote instruction to students. He said the school will stay open Thursday evening (August 13th) until 7 PM to accommodate parents and will again issue equipment on Friday, August 14th from 8 AM to 4 PM and Monday, August 17th beginning at 7:30 AM. Mr. Olivas asked Dr. Fowler if it would be possible to also provide access on Saturday to which Dr. Fowler said he would see what he could do.

President Gantt asked Dr. Geiger his opinion about delaying opening and Dr. Geiger said that his recommendation was the same as it was on Monday to open school Monday, August 17th as our students are getting further and further behind and may never be able to catch up having been out of school for 6 months by September 8th and knowing on-line instruction for them is far less effective, even if a student actively engages. He said that with these delays in in-person opening the state may find it will have a surge in high school dropouts next year.

There being no further discussion and no public comment, the Board took a vote to delay opening school in-person to September 8, 2020, or until such time after September 8th that the AZ DHS defined benchmarks are met.

Mr. Olivas made the motion to approve the following resolution, seconded by Mrs. Hines: Whereas the Arizona Department of Health Services has issued guidance and recommended benchmarks for safely reopening the school, and whereas those benchmarks have not yet been achieved, the Southwest Leadership Academy Governing Board hereby establishes a new target date for re-opening of school to September 8, 2020, or until such time that the benchmarks are

Minutes of the August 12, 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting Southwest Leadership Academy

**met on or after September 8, 2020. A roll call vote was taken,
and all board members voted in the affirmative.**

4. Announcements:

The next Board meeting is September 22, 2020, at Southwest Leadership Academy.

5. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned by President Gantt at 4:37 PM.