

## Superintendent's COVID-19 Advisory Task Force

November 16, 2020

## Minutes

5:30 – start

- I. Agenda & Committee Purpose Review
- II. Mansfield ISD Data Review
  - a. Reviewed current dashboard data- data is dynamic and changes regularly. Dashboard is maintained by staff and often times there is a lag in the data. For example, the screenshot provided in the presentation was taken Monday morning, case data was different by the time of the meeting.
  - b. Quarantine numbers are only based on those who are exposed while on an MISD campus or facility. Students or staff who are exposed outside of the school day and are in quarantine will not be captured on the dashboard. This delineation helps to explain some of the confusion in knowing that a student/staff is in quarantine but not seeing that individual reflected on the dashboard data.
  - c. Table Talk Breakout Discussions- Feedback & Question/Answer from each group:
    - i. Based on presented data- only 1.9% of students have actually tested positive after quarantine.
    - ii. Concern that there is stigma around reporting positive cases or symptoms and some data may not be accurate.
    - iii. Q: What if a quarantine student becomes positive but the parent does not report?  
A: This is a community effort; the reporting process is in our protocol. MISD is doing everything that we can. We are trusting our families to follow that protocol. We have had cases where parents tell us that students are negative and then we have found that the student was actually positive. For the most part, parents have followed the protocol.
    - iv. Q: Do we think quarantine numbers are higher or lower than web report?  
A: They are much higher because of the amount of community spread and infection that happens outside of the school campus. Dashboard only reports school/facility issued quarantines.
    - v. Q: If a parent self-reports diagnosis/quarantine, do we require documentation?  
A: We do ask for it but we can't make them provide it. We do reconcile numbers and positive cases with Tarrant County.
    - vi. At Asa Low and many campuses, staff, students, and community are doing a good job of protecting everyone in school. Masks are working.
- III. Comparison District Data Review
  - a. Reviewed comparable districts positive cases, quarantine numbers, and # of cases per district capita
  - b. Reviewed worldwide, national, state, and local county trends—including new cases and deaths within Texas and North Texas counties from Nov 2-15.
  - c. Table Talk Breakout Discussions- Feedback & Question/Answer from each group:
    - i. Q: What are the initial key takeaways from the district about the data?  
A: What's going on in the community is reflected in our schools. Tarrant County officials are telling us that we are still doing a really good job in keeping our

schools open. We wish numbers were not going up but we are still keeping things under control, schools are clean, contact tracing is working to keep as many cases out of school as we can. We are always looking to see if there's someone who is doing really well. There are stories behind all data and we look to see what is the back story behind other districts with success, many different factors impact districts differently.

- ii. Q: Are we trying to use the data as a way to benchmark our processes?  
A: We are using the data to be able to measure how we are doing and to inform ongoing decisions.
- iii. Q: Do we have the number of how many are in person vs. virtual learning?  
A: Currently 54% of students are in-person and 46% are virtual
- iv. Q: Is there additional communication being planned for parents regarding notifications? There is some concern that parents are being notified well after a positive case has been identified. Can we send more updates and information to parents?  
A: We will share this feedback.
- v. Q: What are the failure rates of in person vs. virtual?  
A: We'll be talking about that in the next question/answer panel.
- vi. Q: Why do some districts have the option for hybrid?  
A: Districts were given options of how they could best provide options for their families. MISD selected the options that we current offer for students and families.
- vii. Q: How sick are our students and staff getting?  
A: We don't have that information.
- viii. Q: What is the morbidity rate?  
A: We don't have that information, there may be county information available on the Tarrant County dashboard.
- ix. Q: How do we compare to Keller?  
A: We'll have to look into that and get some more information about what they are doing and how it's working.
- x. Q: Are we looking at Frisco's quarantine policy?  
A: No, we are following the model from the CDC and Tarrant County for quarantine. Frisco only had 50% of high school students return, they have the ability to space out differently than we have. In addition, in Frisco, 3rd grade and under do not have to wear masks. When they have a younger student test positive, the entire class and teacher are quarantined for 14 days.
- xi. Q: Should we be looking at Arlington's model?  
A: Arlington is in a hybrid model so their contact tracing is easier. However, the effort to switch models at this point is too difficult for us.
- xii. Q: My daughter's classroom has ½ the class quarantined but the remaining students have to stay in their assigned spaces vs. being able to spread out more. Why are we not being flexible with seating charts when more space is available in classrooms?  
A: We are working on modifying this to be able to address these concerns.

#### IV. TEA Pilot Testing Program

- a. New Program launched 10/28/20 for schools/districts
  - b. Provides Rapid Antigen tests with guidelines around testing and protocol, with a goal of providing another resource for testing for schools to be able to quickly identify positive cases.
  - c. General overview of expectations: Program is a voluntary program for districts and students/staff; all students would have to get parental consent to participate
  - d. Reviewed the pros and cons of Mansfield ISD's potential participation (see presentation)
  - e. Current Recommendation: Mansfield ISD will keep watching the program and learning from District's who will be participating; however, ultimately students in the program still would have to be tested again and given that, we are not recommending to opt in at this time.
  - f. Table Talk Breakout Discussions- Feedback & Question/Answer from each group: Review the Why & Why Nots of MISD participation, what would you want to add?
    - i. Why:
      1. It would add access to testing
      2. Rapid results help to quarantine others faster
    - ii. Why Not:
      1. Parents may not want to consent to having their child tested at school
      2. Adding the test seems to complicate the process if you still would have to get an additional test
      3. Multiple new sites just opened: TCC provides a PCR, cheek-swab test that is free
      4. While the program would be free to participate, MISD would still have to cover the cost of additional personnel to cover the administration of the program
- V. Question & Answer Review Panel
- a. Q: What are we going to do to protect the athletes that are doing what they should from being Quarantined?

I know that a majority of the kids testing positive now are all kids that have been going to parties outside of school. I know the District can't police this. That is my point on the Contact Trace Policy though. These kids are not getting it at school.

Ex. My son has a circle of friends of about 8 boys. They are all athletes. They do hang together outside of school but they do not go to large parties. They are all careful keep group tight because they are all Seniors. Several are spring sports so they don't want to lose another year of their sport!

Is there any actual data to back up this Contact Trace Policy is stopping the spread in school?

What can we do to help these athletes stay in school and not get traced?

My son had coach ask him to think about going virtual spring. I understand why. However, my son is in AP Physics 2, AP Calc B/C, AP Econ, AP Eng.4..... I am sorry but virtual is unacceptable for these classes. He is a very good straight A student top 26 in class. Tell me why he needs to have his education hindered??

Can there not be a way to let these athletes in season be allowed to sit in the back of the room away from others?

A: We are protecting all students with the current policies. We saw it a bit in football but we're seeing it more in basketball, basketball doesn't allow for social distancing like other sports. We cannot control what's happening outside of school. We have not had to shut down a building, we have not had to cancel a football game--though we may have to at a middle school. We have had to cancel basketball games already. We hope that this trend of not having to shut down continues. Contact tracing is something that we're required to do and we will continue to do, we think we've been successful, we want to be able to continue to offer choices for our families.

- b. Several Dashboard related questions were briefly reviewed; however, answers were provided earlier in the meeting.
  - i. Additional information provided: We know that 2.4% of students at home for quarantine have developed symptoms or tested positive. This is of the information that we know. We're not capturing any of the students who may be spreading the virus but are asymptomatic, we are not catching students at home who think they have allergies, we are not capturing students whose parents aren't going to get students tested, and we're not capturing students whose parents agree to just return without testing in 14 days. There's a lot that we're not catching.
  - ii. For best accuracy, check the dashboard after 5pm, that's when updates for the day are typically completed.
  - iii. Probable cases are not counted on the dashboard, only confirmed positive cases.
- c. Q: Is the percentage part on the MISD COVID-19 dashboard a combination of both in-person and virtual students? If so, why? *(Submitted by 2 different task force members)*  
A: There is an explanation on the dashboard regarding which cases are included. It's in-person students and students who come for extracurriculars.
- d. Q: Frisco numbers how are they looking since they went to TEA??  
Their dashboard as of Friday the 13th says 134 total on Campus cases and 64 off campus cases. Their district is double our size and their on campus total as of today they only have 33 more on campus cases than MISD.  
A: Frisco was addressed earlier in the meeting; Frisco has fewer student's for in-person learning. In addition, their community factors may be different.
- e. Q: Please provide numbers on how many students/classes have been failed the first 2 six weeks. If MISD is offering grade redemption opportunities, it leads parents to believe it must be a significant number. It also appears that only Legacy High School received the option to do this. Is that the case or is this district wide? What is being done to make sure that students are actually learning the material instead of just boosting their grades?  
A: MISD is following the same grade redemption processes we have in past years. These are not new, but we recognize that there is a greater need this year. These opportunities are available districtwide and while now is the time of the semester where campus administration is reaching out to student's, parents and students are

encouraged to proactively reach out to campus administration to determine the best course of action for each individual student. One grade redemption strategy is to have the student complete the portion of the material they did not show mastery of. Ex: A student passes 1st & 3rd 6 weeks, but fails the second 6 weeks badly enough to fail for the semester. One strategy for the student is to retake just that portion of the curriculum in a credit recovery class via Edgenuity.

Why are students not being successful?

1. Deficits from the spring.
  2. In-Person students were not coming until the 3rd six weeks when we changed attendance rules.
    - a. For Virtual Students - Principals & Teachers are trying everything...including visiting homes on a regular basis.
- f. Q: Please show the numbers of how many kids are on track for the year based on the assessments MISD is doing. It appears grades are inflated, but test scores are indicating that the students have not mastered the content.
- A: During the October 27 Board Meeting, Donna O'Brian gave a presentation on this topic. If you'd like an in depth look, the board meeting and presentation are posted on our website. [Recording of Presentation](#) and [Presentation Slides](#)
- K-2: ISIP Scores for Reading Proficiency – Below normal for MISD, but still outpacing our neighbor districts in a “normal” year. The students hardest hit by missing the spring semester were our Kindergarten (current 1st grade) students. The missed a large part of the foundational literacy instruction. We have embedded this into our curriculum and these deficits are being addressed currently by our teachers. We take ISIP each month so this gives us regular and timely data.
- 3-8: MAP Scores – This is the first year we have used MAP testing on a broad basis. During our initial administration we outperformed the national averages during a “normal” year, but we are not sure how that will project to STAAR scores. The reason we are using the MAP exam this year is because it dives down to see what was previously missed that might be impeding a student's learning this year. Given the missed instruction in the spring we felt it was important to provide teachers with this tool during the 2020-2021 school year.
- 9-12: We will be taking the state's interim assessments in EOC courses. Those are given at various times during the year depending upon the course. The first are upcoming prior to the Winter Break.
- g. Q: Why are some teachers not allowing students to spread out in classes that have room? Example. A class had 6 students out for contact tracing. Student asks to spread out and teacher says no because of seating chart? Are we really not able to think with common sense and have blank seating charts available so when there is opportunity to spread out they can and the teacher can fill in seating chart for that day when she does attendance? If the district is going to maintain such a strict contact trace policy then the kids remaining in class HAVE THE RIGHT TO ASK TO SPREAD OUT IF IT CAN BE DONE! It should be done! It's not rocket science and it only takes 5 mins. Put the Day and Date on Chart and mark it as Replacement chart for the day or whatever. It is the lack of thinking

outside the box or thinking with forethought and having plans in place that leads some of us to believe there is a lack of Leadership.

A: In theory, it should not be an issue to modify seating charts and make this accommodation. In terms of how that impacts a teacher, we'll be working with principals to make adjustments.

- h. Q: Positive Tests and Quarantines – We've heard that kids are being quarantined solely on a parent calling in and saying their child has covid and that the schools are not asking if there is or requiring to see a positive test. We've also heard of students who actually have positive covid tests going to school because the parent didn't notify the school. How is this process supposed to work? Does the parent call, does the health department notify the school, or is it the doctors or company that did the tests responsibility?

A: We depend on parents to report positives; Tarrant County verifies positive cases. We have not had one parent call us and tell us that students are positive when they are not.

- i. Q: Why are School Board members telling staff members that reach out with COVID concerns that they "should weigh the benefit to risk in their employment and act accordingly" ??? Doesn't MISD want to try to keep their staff? Does MISD truly think that a response like that helps moral?

A: Dr. Cantu is aware of this specific email. As a district we are doing our very best to accommodate and take care of our employees as best as we can so that we can keep our schools open while also providing choice for our parents.

- j. Q: As cases and deaths increase in the area, will MISD add a death column to the tracker for both students and staff?

A: Thankfully, we have not had that happen in our district yet and we pray that it does not happen.

- k. Q: How is MISD managing the pool of substitute teachers? I understand there's a shortage (if not, please know that is a current rumor)

A: Yes, we have fewer subs than we typically do. This is not unique to MISD, it is happening locally and nationally. We've formed a committee to monitor/advise/support the challenge and we have modified virtual vs. in person sub practice.

- l. Q: What is MISD doing to recruit more substitute teachers? People are saying they've applied but have yet to hear back from MISD. There are people saying that the page you land on when you search "substitute teaching" on the district website is disjointed/difficult. Has MISD looked into how to make the process/website more user friendly for those who are interested in subbing.

A: Advertising on social media, created full time sub positions, changed requirements to become a sub for this year only, providing virtual orientations to onboard subs faster, and we're working with an outside staffing agency to support as well. As far as the responsiveness goes, we discovered that some people who had not completed steps in the process of applying, which stalls their application. We are making adjustments to reach out to those who are taking longer or need additional pieces submitted. We have asked the district webmaster to include additional information on the website to clarify sub questions.

- m. Q: As we get into cold/flu/allergy season, what is the procedure for kids who may show symptoms at school? Is the nurse's decision final? Is there a process before quarantining

kids? For example, we've heard of a student being quarantined because she had a 'fever' after coming in from playing at recess. The parent said that the child did not have a fever when she got her home and later their physician said the child was fine, but yet the child now has to quarantine for 14 days. We've heard of some schools accepting parent/doctors notes saying symptoms are because of something else, but other schools not accepting the same notifications. Not everyone can afford a doctor visit for a sore throat or cough, what can they do? There are other viruses other than covid that shouldn't require a doctor visit or a 14 day quarantine. What will the procedure be? This is especially important now that MISD will not allow these kids to "attend" classes remotely unless they have been quarantined by the district. If this does become an issue, will MISD reconsider letting the in-person students attend remotely in these cases?

A: The pandemic alters how we respond to normal symptoms and illness on a school campus. A lot of covid symptoms mimic many other things, given our current community spread our assumption is that it is covid. But you have options- individuals can stay home for 10 days or can go get a test and confirm that you don't have it. Individuals can test out of symptoms but you cannot test out of exposure.

- n. Q: Judge Whitley has said that he wishes schools would put sports on hold. Has MISD considered this? Under what circumstances would MISD consider this? Who would make this decision?

A: Parents have the option to pull their students athletes from practice or competition. Any statewide decision would come through UIL. Locally, there's a district executive committee of districts (who compete with one another) that created protocol for how to handle this year, this is the protocol that we've been following.

- o. Q: There are rumors that misd is going to go virtual between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Has this been discussed? If MISD were to shut down a school/class or grade level would it always be for a particular period of time? Is misd still using the same Campus/Facility response rubric that is posted? Have there been any changed to the rubric? I don't believe it's on the MISD rubric, but I've seen other districts close schools not because of the number of actual positive, but because of the large number of kids/teachers who had been quarantined. Is this something MISD would consider also? Under what circumstances? If so, for how long would the school be closed? Is this actually on the rubric? If not, will it be added?

A: Our plan is to be back after Thanksgiving. Our protocols remain the same for closing specific campuses.

- p. Q: I understand that some kids are failing in a virtual learning environment (could be a rumor). If this is the case, what do we attribute it to (the quality of virtual learning or students not logging in)? And, what is MISD doing to rectify this issue?

A: Currently the percentage of students failing is not drastically different between In-Person and Virtual. While we continue to work towards improving our Virtual instruction, the biggest correlation between both In-Person and Virtual students failing is being absent for instruction. We made it mandatory for In-Person students to be in class for attendance purposes this third six weeks, but principals and teachers are still

having to work very hard to get a portion of Virtual students to engage during direct instruction.

- q. Q: Will standardized testing be required during this COVID environment? (i.e. STAAR)?  
A: We are awaiting guidance from the state. We do not expect to know anything until a new federal Secretary of Education is named and the Texas Legislative Session convenes in January.
- r. Q: TEA Rapid COVID Testing Program: Is MISD considering this? Why/Why not?  
A: The program is open ended and there is not an end date to opt-in. Other districts have piloted the program on a smaller scale. Based on our current thinking, we are not recommending that we opt-in at this time but Dr. Cantu and her team will review the feedback from the group. We'll also make the commitment to add this to our agenda for the next task force meeting.

#### VI. Closing Discussions-

- a. Table Talk Breakout Discussions- Feedback & Question/Answer from each group:  
What are 2-3 pressing issues that are still out there?
  - i. Substitutes (multiple groups reported this issue)
  - ii. Staffing virtual classes
  - iii. 98% of quarantined students do not become ill
    - a. Quarantining is a risk management strategy. Data is currently showing that 16-20% of children are asymptomatic carriers.
  - iv. Access to testing for students
  - v. Please add the quarantine percentages to the dashboard  
Q: If a school has a % of students and staff quarantined, could it cause the school to close? If so, what is that percentage?  
A: We're sending students home to quarantine because we don't know if they are sick. Quarantining is the mitigating strategy that allows us to keep schools open and removes potentially sick students from the campus. Why would we then close a school based on numbers of students/staff in quarantine? We might take into consideration total attendance but the more critical issues are the number of active cases.
  - vi. Continued concerns regarding the data, accuracy of data and how to understand it
    - a. Increase parent communication and information shared with parents.
    - b. Can we send the presentation from Russ Jones out to parents so that they can better understand the quarantine process? (presentation is posted online with the Board meeting)
    - c. Suggestion to create video tutorial of the dashboard and the updating process
  - vii. Custodial staff shortage
  - viii. Smaller class sizes
- b. Next Meeting: the district is asking that all larger meetings move to virtual, our December meeting will be virtual. More information about date and details will be sent out via email.