

Mayor Jim Hovland called the July 13, 2020 virtual RCM meeting to order.

THIRD ANNUAL CONVERSATION WITH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Curt Johnson: introductory remarks and facilitator

A few direct comments from our School Leaders. Meeting summary below.

Theresa Battle, Burnsville, Eagan, Savage and Chase Anderson, Wayzata: talked about “partnerships” and “relationships.” Relationships were already established last spring; if distance learning continues in the fall, it will be more difficult to start that way.

Matt Hillman, Northfield: “Urgency brings change.” “We knew about inequities, but this experience shined the brightest possible light on the broadband situation. It should be a utility — like heat.”

Carlton Jenkins, Robbinsdale: “We found we were still using the traditional practices.”

Renee Corneille, St. Anthony, New Brighton: (Refers to survey) The survey found 25 percent of kids in school said that even the distance learning we were presenting was “better” than regular school. Kids of color offered this response more than whites.

Dave Webb, South St. Paul: We are all working to get to “personalized learning, to a 1:1 relationship.”

Keith Jacobus, South Washington County: We had discovered that many people do well working from home. So, we need a new flexibility. The question is how, (given the thicket of regulations we all face).

Karsten Anderson, Rochester: “We need to be radically different.” And, “We should focus on the most important things.” Left behind will be things like “seat time,” licensure, Carnegie Units, etc.”

Mike Redmond, Shakopee: We have taken our structure for granted. No longer. We need to focus on learning.

Steve Unowsky, Richfield: “The status quo does not work for Black and brown kids. We have to start taking this seriously.”

Carlton Jenkins, Robbinsdale: “Courageous conversations make me puke. Courageous action is what we need. This is an American problem. And remember, a lot of white kids are not making it either; and Indigenous students.

Teresa Battle, Burnsville, Eagan, Savage: One of the things we discovered was how many of our staff didn’t have any internet access either, outside of the school.

Steve Unowsky, Richfield: As to re-opening, the things in the buildings are just physical issues. The real problem is transportation. How are we going to get kids to school?

Keith Jacobus, South Washington County: Please tell the governor NOT to leave it to us.

Josh Swanson, Eden Prairie: If we rely on local control, we’ll invite districts to be pitted against each other.”

Carlton Jenkins, Robbinsdale: “It will be a lonely place to be. I don’t want to risk even one life.”

Masks. (Most said yes, if that is what it takes to create more comfort with re-opening schools. Need to account for differences around the state. But have a policy that is statewide. Districts with more than one city within their boundaries have a special and difficult problem. One more reason to have a state policy.

1. When regular school was suspended and students and teachers needed to shift to online learning, what worked – what did not? What was learned?

- The only way is *through*. Values guide us.
- With vision, urgency, and partnership rapid change is possible.
- At the core is relationships and partnerships – we are in this together - cooperation and collaboration.
- This process has helped deepen the engagement with parents becoming partners in education.
- Amplified the importance of the individualized needs that each family has. Staff learned things about students and families that they would not have learned in person.
- More direct student attention. Teachers who were interviewed were surprised that for some students that never talked in the classroom, came alive online and during 1-on-1 time. In the online platforms they felt the power to speak up and ask questions.
- Teachers helped to navigate the additional worry/concerns.

2. What is your thinking about approaching the next school year?

- Prioritize standards
- Personalized/Individualized Learning
 - Recorded content allows for learning at different paces.
 - Identifying family's personalized needs.
 - Sleep and learning habits vary by child and family
- Improved Technology / Methods
 - Continual improvement from spring, to summer school, to fall.
- If state guidelines on capacity are set it will force hybrid of in person and distance.
- Transportation to and from school is one of the biggest challenges.

There are concerns about returning, but for specific reasons.

Feedback about returning in person from teachers/staff:

- 20-30% staff are uncomfortable coming back. Personal or family member that is medically fragile.
- Variety of levels of comfort to coming back.

Feedback about returning in person from families:

- Some families who will only consider distance learning, no in person.
- We may see families trying to make school selection based on mask preference – this is not sustainable.

Masks usage in schools?

- As cities consider adopting their own mask mandates, what kind of pressure does that put on schools?
- Many superintendents and school boards encompass more than one city. The mandates need to be state or even national.
- Opening schools is one thing but keeping them open becomes another challenge and masks make a huge difference on that point.
- Some families may choose to homeschool if masks are required.
- Dr. Carlton Jenkins will share a resource for getting free masks.

Should a decision about returning come from the Governor or should it be up to each individual district?

- Decision should come from state. It is a public health crisis and superintendents are not health professionals.
 - There could be flexibility for different areas of the state but needs to come from the Governor.
- When we make decisions together it is easier. Multiple perspectives are always important.
- We do not want to pit districts against each other.
- The decision should not rest on a superintendent, they are not healthy professionals.

3. How can schools and families and our communities be better prepared, e.g. flexible budgets, current software/apps

- *Emergency Distance Learning* (spring 2020), little time to prepare.
- *Distance Learning*: We now have more time. The initial pivot took place over 8 days.
- In spring 2020 relationships with students were formed in person, but now in the fall those relationships may be formed online – this is a new challenge.
- Many districts have been able to shift resources, but the longer term changes need to come from how we invest and policy.
- There is an entire online learning pedagogy. Now working with teachers on professional development.
- Accelerated Future/Technology: we were thrust into the future faster than we ever thought.

4. How does online learning impact less resourced families?

- We knew about inequities before COVID – this has made them more evident than ever.
 - Food, workspace, internet, teacher and classroom interaction, suspensions, etc....
- Internet should be viewed as a public utility. There needs to be a public private/partnership to invest.
- Survey went out to 130,000 parents. Something that emerged is that people of color stated they had more one-on-one attention online than in person. Distance learning leveled the playing field, you cannot pick and choose in the same way you can in a classroom. No student is left out.
- Suspensions are the lowest they have ever been.
- We cannot go back to a school system that was not working for black, brown and native children. We need to transform the system. School leadership is overwhelmingly white.
- Not just a courageous conversation. A time for courageous action. There needs to be an action plan and forward movement.
- Inequity is happening not just with the students. COVID showed that a number of employees also lacked internet or resources in order to do their job.

5. Is the pandemic an opportunity to change the way schooling is done? If so, what changes would you make in the system?

- This needs to be a regional and national conversation – everyone is impacted.
- Congratulate ourselves on changing and pivoting quickly, but we need to critically look at why we changed so quickly for public health, and have not addressed systemic racism in the same way. Now is the time to reimagine and change the system.
- Sharing information across the system is key.
- This health crisis has put public education back at the forefront.
 - We need to look at how we shape policies.
- Personalization and flexibility to work at different times of the day. Is seat time antiquated?

- We need to prepare to become radically different in everything we do either in person or virtual. Focus on the most important standards. There are rules from the state that need to get shattered.
- We take our existing systems for granted. Are they really supporting our mission?
- Time has too often been the constant. Learning needs to be the constant rather than time.
- It is important to have partnerships with the cities – thanked the mayors for this conversation!
- Schools in the future - what happens to the physical property.

ATTENDANCE

MAYORS

James Hovland	City of Edina (co-chair)
Mike Maguire	City of Eagan (co-chair)
Marylee Abrams	City of Maplewood
Doug Anderson	City of Lakeville
Tracy Bertram	City of Becker
Anne Burt	City of Woodbury
Bill Droste	City of Rosemount
Sean Dowse	City of Red Wing
Jimmy Francis	City of South Saint Paul
Jason Gadd	City of Hopkins
Shep Harris	City of Golden Valley
Courtney Johnson	City of Carver
Marvin Johnson	City of Independence
Elizabeth Kautz	City of Burnsville
John Keis	City of Little Canada
Carol Lagergren	City of Norwood Young America
Chris Lund	City of Hamburg
Julie Mass-Kusske	City of Maple Plain
Sandy Martin	City of Shoreview
Kim Norton	City of Rochester
Rhonda Pownell	City of Northfield
Maria Regan Gonzales	City of Richfield
Paul Reinke	City of Oakdale
Randy Stille	City of Saint Anthony
Ken Willcox	City of Wayzata
Janet Williams	City of Savage
Jeff Wosje	City of Plymouth

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Chase Anderson	Wayzata Public Schools
Karsten Anderson	Rochester Schools
Theresa Battle	ISD 191 Burnsville-Eagan-Savage
Michael Baumann	ISD194 Lakeville Schools
Crystal Brakke	Richfield Schools, Board Member
Renee Correille	ISD 282 St Anthony New Brighton Schools
Zack Duckworth	Lakeville Schools, Board Member
Amy Goerwitz	Northfield Public Schools, Board Member
Matt Hillmann	Northfield Public Schools
Keith Jacobus	South Washington County Schools
Dr. Carlton Jenkins	Robbinsdale Area Schools
Mary Kreger	Rosemount-Apple Valley – Eagan Schools
Richard McGregory	Robbinsdale Area Schools
Julie Nielsen	South Washington County Schools

Karen Orcutt	Orono Public Schools
Mike Redmond	Shakopee Public Schools
Timothy Schochomeyer	Central Public Schools
Teri Staloch	Prior Lake Area Schools
Josh Swanson	Eden Prairie Schools
Christine Tucci Osorio	ISD 622 North St. Paul – Maplewood – Oakdale Schools
Steve Unowsky	ISD 280 Richfield Public Schools
Dave Webb	South St. Paul District Public Schools
Taylor Williams	

GUESTS

Andrea Inouye, City of Minneapolis, Office of Mayor Frey; Curt Johnson; Brad Larson, City Administrator for the City of Savage; Justin Miller, City Manager for City of Lakeville;

ULI MINNESOTA

Caren Dewar, Cathy Bennett, Rachel Keenan

NEXT MEETING

August – summer recess