



**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
September 24, 2021**

**Office of the State Board of Education
Len B. Jordan Building
650 W State Street, 3rd Floor
Boise, Idaho**

A special meeting of the Idaho State Board of Education was held via Zoom teleconference on September 24, 2021, with the call originating from the Office of the State Board of Education in Boise. Board President Kurt Liebich presided and called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. (MT). A roll call of Board members was taken.

Present

Kurt Liebich, President
Dr. Dave Hill, Vice-President
Dr. Linda Clark, Secretary
Shawn Keough

Bill Gilbert
Cally J. Roach
Cindy Siddoway
Superintendent Sherri Ybarra

Absent

None

Friday, September 24, 2021, 4:00 p.m. (MT)

PLANNING, POLICY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

1. Impact of Delta Variant on Public Education (K-20)

Board President Liebich opened the meeting by stating that he convened this Special Board meeting to open the discussion, and to give everyone on the Board updated information, on where Idaho is in regard to COVID-19 since the state went into Crisis Standards of Care. Speakers for today's meeting will be:

- Dr. Kathryn Turner, Deputy State Epidemiologist, Idaho Division of Public Health
- Dr. Andy Grover, Executive Director, Idaho Association of School Administrators, and
- Representatives from Boise State University, Idaho State University, University of Idaho, and Lewis-Clark State College who were asked to present data on how COVID-19 is impacting their respective schools.

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Dr. Kathryn Turner presented the following updated information concerning COVID-19 and the Delta variant as it pertains to Idaho.

- On September 21, 2021 1,800 COVID-19 cases were reported in one day, a record high for Idaho.
- The daily average case count is over 1,000 and that trend line is moving upward.
- A record number of cases in school age children between the ages of 5-17 were reported for the week ending 9/18/2021. All of this data is displayed on the school resources page at coronavirus.idaho.gov.
- The incidence rate among those 18-29 was 585 cases per 100,000 last week which was the highest weekly rate during 2021.
- Projections done in summer of 2021 was that Idaho would achieve 28,000 COVID-19 cases a week by October; projections currently show 21,000 cases a week in Idaho by mid-November. Assumption is that there is no vaccine for children under 12 years of age and the Delta variant is still circulating.
- Modelers are suggesting that cases may have peaked nationwide but Idaho has been trending toward the higher end of the model estimates for three months.
- Increased pediatric covid numbers are being monitored as well. Right now, over 40 children are in the hospital week to week with confirmed COVID-19.

Board President Liebich said the previous estimate was calling for 28,000 cases a week by mid-October and asked if the worst-case scenario now was 20,000 and why has the peak been pushed out to mid-November. Dr. Turner said these projections are developed by a coalition of universities and other entities and they all submit models and then aggregates are created. The modelers believe that because of the number of those who have received the vaccine combined with those who were infected but who may have natural immunity, the case counts could come down about 10,000 cases based on the sheer number of people who were infected in the last two months.

Board President Liebich asked if things are likely to get worse before they get better. Dr. Turner did not wish to speculate but she has not seen a decrease in case counts week over week, so she is not confident that we have plateaued based on that trend. The number of reports they are receiving would suggest that we are not seeing a decrease in case counts, but a plateau might be in play, and she will know in a week or so.

Mr. Gilbert asked if test positivity ratio was being built into the case numbers. Dr. Turner said the time between when a person takes a COVID-19 test and gets their results is increasing so the current weeks positivity is preliminary. Mr. Gilbert asked if the data looks at the three distinct geographies in the state and are there any differences in the data in the trend lines as it pertains to the three distinct geographies. Dr. Turner said the northern part of the state and southwest Idaho were seeing very high case rates but there are lower-case numbers in the eastern part of the state. The very far eastern part of the state does not seem to be having the large spike in cases as the rest of the state, perhaps due to the fact that they were hit very hard last winter, and they might have higher rates of natural immunity.

There were no further comments or questions for Dr. Turner from the Board members.

Dr. Andy Grover reported on conditions in our schools / districts from around the state.

- Schools that opened in early August said the number of students enrolled was high and schools reported attendance was near 90 percent. Three weeks into the school year and attendance fell to the low 80 percentile. The reason for this decline in attendance is being attributed to more COVID testing of students taking place and some kids are simply just sick with other things besides COVID. Students have been gone from two days to two weeks. These absences highlighted the ADA vs. enrollment attendance issue around the state. The hybrid model also makes it hard to count enrollment.
- Districts cannot find classified staff. Pay for classified employees begins at \$9.50 an hour up to \$11.00 an hour. Pay at the local McDonalds starts at \$13.00 - \$15.00 an hour. Sixty classified staff positions are open around the state: including custodians, bus drivers, and paraprofessionals. Substitute teachers - districts who used to have 200 substitute teachers now have 30-35. In the first five weeks of the school year three districts had to shut down due to a labor shortage. One of those districts is now in hybrid mode. Labor shortages are going to shut our schools down if the pandemic continues, there just are not enough people to keep our schools open.
- Last year we did not have mass testing for COVID-19, and this year people are testing more so the positive test results are high.
- Conflict in the districts is at an all-time high. Communities have taken over Board meetings and a huge split is developing around the state between administrators, teachers, and parents over whether to mask or not mask, vaccinate or not vaccinate.
- Eight teachers / administrators have passed away since the school year began. Some teachers are returning to work sick because they have no sick time and there are no substitutes to take over their classes. Administrators are finding they are subbing due to the lack of teachers which leads to them not having time to do evaluations of their teachers, and their other administrative duties.
- Dr. Glover said we really need to find ways to support local school boards and our schools since they are taking a beating right now from families. There will be more contested races in November for Board spots in the next election than ever before. This may change the culture in many of the schools throughout the state.

Ms. Keough asked if there was a guestimate of the COVID-19 cases schools are tracking. Dr. Glover said many schools do not find out until 10 days past the administering of a COVID-19 test that a student or their parent may have tested positive for COVID-19, so it is hard to track true COVID-19 numbers. Because there are 115 districts and 77 charters, and they can all do what they do differently, it is hard to track at any level on how, or if, we are testing students.

Superintendent Ybarra said the State Department of Education (SDE) recently received \$10 million in money which will be available to help pay for classified staff and to help bring in other people who want to substitute and help the districts. The Governor has also freed up state agencies and their employees who wish to substitute teach. Superintendent Ybarra mentioned that she is going to go back out and substitute teach, and she has over 100 employees who are also interested in substitute teaching to help the districts. COVID-19 Testing is an issue and SDE is working with the Department of Health and Welfare to deal with this topic in the districts. The attendance vs enrollment issue is a huge concern so moving away from attendance to an enrollment-based system for funding is becoming more important.

There were no further comments or questions for Dr. Glover from Board members.

Higher Education Report on current COVID-19 case numbers.

Dr. Cynthia Pemberton, President, Lewis-Clark State College gave an update on current infection rates at LCSC.

- LCSC is tracking reported infection rates daily. They are currently reporting that there were 90 total infections since school began, 9 cases are active with 1 individual in school-based isolation.
- LCSC is tracking daily vaccination rates and overall, the employee vaccination rate is at 67-68 percent, face to face student population vaccination rate is at 34 percent, residence life students at 46 percent, student athletes at 50 percent, and part-time students are at 15 percent.
- LCSC does weekly surveillance testing. Students can opt out due to medical or religious exemption or vaccination proof. Weekly testing is working pretty well. Many students forget to test weekly and LCSC follows up to remind people they must check in.
- COVID-19 test results are sent directly to the student and the State Department of Health, not to the school. They do not collect personal health information for any individual.
- Masking is required for all interior spaces on the campus. The mandate will stay in place until October 15th at which time it will be reevaluated.
- If students get vaccinated by October 1, LCSC students were offered an incentive of \$100 Warrior bucks to spend as they wish on the campus.

Dr. Hill asked about LCSC's faculty and other staff and wondered if LCSC was suffering the same type of issues as discussed earlier during Dr. Glover's presentation. Dr. Pemberton did say classified staff salaries are a problem in higher education. She needs custodians and they pay \$11.00 an hour and the local McDonald's is paying \$15.00 an hour. Enrollment is down and the largest enrollment decline is in the CTE program, and they believe that is due to the ongoing pandemic. Dr. Pemberton said students and faculty really want to be in the classroom and they are willing to work with the COVID-19 safety protocol restrictions to make that happen.

There were no further comments or questions for Dr. Pemberton from the Board.

Toni Broyles, Special Assistant to the President, University of Idaho, spoke about UI's COVID-19 protocols.

- UI is focusing on vaccinations versus testing.
- Incentives to students include drawings for \$1,000 and \$5,000 tuition credits and 3,500 students have participated in that program thus far and that number continues to climb. UI will offer that incentive until November.
- The local Moscow hospital is not at crisis standards of care but in contingent standards of care.
- When school began UI averaged five students a week in quarantine and three per week in isolation and currently today only 1 student is in isolation.
- UI has been consistent in their requirement and use of hand sanitizer and masking.

Board President Liebich asked about the protocols for the upcoming Ribbon Cutting / homecoming event at UI. Ms. Broyles said masking requirements for all indoor activities is in place and they are reviewing that every three weeks. Masking will be required for the Homecoming game. As far as UI is aware only one student has withdrawn from classes due to the mask requirement.

There were no further comments or questions for Toni Broyles from the Board.

Dani Dunstan, Vice President of Operations and Chief of Staff, Idaho State University, spoke on behalf of ISU and their COVID-19 protocols.

- Four operational levels are in place. Orange – low risk, white – increased risk, gray – moderate risk, and black – high risk. ISU is currently at the white level with increased risk.
- Face coverings are required indoors and outdoors for events of over 150 people where distancing cannot be maintained.
- Asymptomatic screening is in place for students in housing and athletics who are unvaccinated. They can opt out of the screening if they get vaccinated.
- ISU is planning to vaccinate 1,000 students a week who are asymptomatic.
- Have seen an increased number of on campus case rates since school began. That number equates to 69 cases each week for the last two weeks for all of ISU's five campuses. Positivity rate was at 1 percent when the semester began and is now at 4 percent for the asymptomatic screening. Positivity rate for symptomatic cases is between 15-25 percent.
- ISU's contact tracing program is in place, and they are contacting those exposed to COVID-19 within 48 hours.
- Data on current COVID-19 cases is reviewed weekly.

Board President Liebich asked if there was one indicator they are looking at that would push ISU to a hybrid model. Ms. Dunstan said they use a number of metrics to gather information such as campus case rates, the current community situation, the health system situation, but what weighs heaviest is ISU's educational mission. Students want in person instruction so all of those factors help to determine ISU's course of action.

There were no further comments or questions for Dani Dunstan from the Board.

Dr. Marlene Tromp, President of Boise State University gave an update on BSU's COVID-19 protocols.

- Masking is required in indoor settings and in crowded outdoor gatherings.
- There is ongoing surveillance testing for high-risk groups such as student athletes, club sports and childcare center teachers.
- BSU has an isolation hall for residential students who test positive, so they have a place to isolate for 10 days.
- BSU's testing center has done over 46,000 COVID-19 tests for the region to date.
- A contact tracing clinic is in place.
- A vaccine clinic established February 2021 has now administered over 7,000 doses of vaccine in the region.
- Campus positivity rate for the past week was 3 percent which is a 46 percent drop-in positivity rate in one week. That is a 64 percent drop-in positivity rates since the peak in early September.
- Average rate of positivity rate on campus is 1 percent and that is being attributed to a campus wide survey from faculty, staff and students that suggests there is an 88 percent vaccination rate on campus.

Mr. Gilbert asked how this data will impact the upcoming football game. Dr. Tromp said after consulting with the health care CEO's and Central District Health they feel it would be an unfair burden on the health care system to use that testing for game days since BSU's case numbers are so low. BSU will still offer testing prior to entering a game in case anyone wishes to take the test, and there will be a vaccination tent for those who want to receive the vaccine. The large-scale testing or vaccination requirement for attending a game will no longer be in place.

There were no further comments or questions for Dr. Tromp from the Board.

Board Member Gilbert left the meeting at 5:00 p.m. (MT)

Board President Liebich thanked all of the University's for their updated information and asked for them to keep the Board updated on any changes in how COVID-19 is impacting their campuses.

Ms. Keough asked if there was a timeline to begin discussions about some of the issues brought up during the meeting. Some of these issues seem to be urgent such as the ADA enrollment issue. Tracie Bent, Chief Policy and Planning Officer, State Board of Education, said a timeline is in place and they are currently waiting for the October upload of attendance and enrollment data so they can look at that data.

Dr. Clark said the unfinished learning work group is ready to bring forward some recommendations. Support for teachers is a focus with resources for professional development, and mentoring. For the new Board members Dr. Clark mentioned that the

Board's focus will also be on K-4 literacy, 5-9 Math, and credit recovery at the high school level. Dr. Clark echoed the need for a meeting to deal with these issues quickly.

Superintendent Ybarra said perhaps taking student teachers out of the classroom and making them substitute teachers to help during the crisis should be explored. Dr. Clark said that request has already been put into motion and a discussion with representatives from the Universities will happen next week concerning this issue. Ms. Bent confirmed to Dr. Clark that Board policies and procedures are already in place to allow this to happen under work-based learning. Dr. Clark said there are between 170 and 200 student teachers currently in our universities right now who might be able to help.

There were no further comments or questions from the Board.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was entertained.

BOARD ACTION

M/S (Hill / Keough): I move to adjourn the meeting at 5:06 p.m. (MT). The motion carried 6-0. Board Member Bill Gilbert was absent from voting.