For Immediate Release

July 17, 2020

Pueblo District 70 Board of Education reviews Return to School plans

Citing numerous safety and health concerns, along with the recent Executive Order requiring masks in public, the Pueblo District 70 Board of Education heard both sides of the recommendations in how D70 students will begin the new school year: In-Person or Remotely.

The virtual Board meeting was convened Friday afternoon to approve a contract M.O.U. (memorandum of understanding) within the Employee Negotiated Agreement. The Board was also presented a summary of the 15-page District Re-Entry Plan prepared and presented by District staff.

“I appreciate the time and want to acknowledge the work and effort to prepare and present these plans,” commented Board Member Fredrick Quintana, “I’m just concerned that we are moving too quickly to get students back. Not only do we have a responsibility to safely bring back students and to provide the upmost care for our staff, we have a duty also to our community at large.”

Director of Student Services Greg Kealsing pointed to the hundreds of hours of meetings and work that various task forces put in over the last 5 months to prepare schools to reopen.

“I want parents and staff to know that we have done everything possible to this point to safely prepare for in-person learning,” said Keasling. “We have protective equipment on order for staff and students and procedures to screen for virus symptoms and deal with exposure. But as the conditions of the pandemic keep changing, we have to keep adapting.”

District Public Information Officer Todd Seip added that a recent survey sent to parents earlier this month showed that 56% of families were “certain” to send their students back for in-person learning, 27% “likely” and 17% “uncertain or unwilling.”

“That survey was sent when COVID-19 positive test results were on the decline and our local businesses were just beginning to reopen, remarked Seip. “I would speculate that those numbers would be different now – with possibly more parents uncertain. We have a follow-up questionnaire going back out to parents this weekend to see if there is a change in parents comfort levels for Returning to School.”

Superintendent Ed Smith commended the District staff for their hard work to prepare schools for fall learning. District 70 has dramatically upgraded its remote learning platform with the addition
of Schoology. This new platform will allow teachers to offer their own classroom content and curriculum to students across all grades. “It is much easier to navigate for students and parents and teachers will not have to create new or extra work. It really is their class – just an online version of their class,” said Smith “Feedback we received from parents this last spring told us that students really didn’t fully engage with the math and reading programs we used when we had to close abruptly. We looked to other school districts and what they were using and realized that Schoology really fit all our needs. It is part of our Powerschool gradebook and attendance program, so parents, students and teacher can access it much easier.”

The Board officially approved a calendar revision that moves back the student start date one week from August 17 to August 24, 2020. Pueblo County Teachers Association President Amy Spock addressed the Board with comments and concerns from local teachers. “Teachers have reached out to me with concerns and the need for an additional week of planning and training time for prepare for students arrival back to school – however that looks, whether fully online or a hybrid or in the classroom,” said Spock.

District 70 staff reports back to buildings on August 10 for two weeks of training and preparation. Parents will be receiving communication from their school soon with information on schedules, and registration. School officially begins (remotely) on August 24, 2020.

The Board of Education scheduled another meeting for Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at 5pm to further discuss and decide the Return to School choice. The meeting will be available for live streaming on the District 70 YouTube page at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0X3-WmRaMW3iAhrFvHjcDg

For more information – Contact Todd Seip, Public Information Officer at tseip@district70.org