



Board Meeting Recap

For Evanston Twp. High School District 202

ETHS Board of Education

Pat Savage-Williams, President

Monique Parsons, Vice President

Members: Jude Laude, Gretchen

Livingston, Pat Maunsell, Liz

Rolewicz, Stephanie Teterycz

Student Member: Carmiya Bady

Regular School Board Meeting

January 11, 2021

COVID update for ETHS—at home and in school

On Monday, January 11, the ETHS school board received a comprehensive update on how ETHS is coping with COVID and e-learning this school year. Due to the pandemic, last March the school switched from in-person to remote (e-: electronic) learning from home, along with all Illinois schools by state mandate.

With COVID surging in Illinois, particularly in Cook County, this fall ETHS—and many Chicago-area high schools—chose not to open in person and to continue with e-learning throughout first semester and into January. The post-holiday COVID surge has been a great concern, especially with more infectious mutated variants in Indiana and in Illinois.

According to Supt. Eric Witherspoon, ETHS is following guidance from the state and local public health departments that are monitoring the science behind COVID. ETHS is located in Region 10 designated by the state, which had a 10% positivity rate as of January 11. Anything above 8% percent is considered a “substantial-risk region.” ETHS is carefully monitoring the public health metrics.

Witherspoon said: “We are talking about life and death here. Our remote learning is working well. Our

attendance rate is high [1st semester: 96.8%]; we don’t have to take risks. But we will go to some version of a hybrid model when it’s safe because there are certain benefits to in-person learning.” He has talked to local and regional public health officials and offered ETHS to be a vaccination site when the state goes to a phase 1(b) plan. “And we will give a 30-day notice to parents, students, and the community when ETHS is going hybrid,” Witherspoon added.

Several administrators updated the board about what ETHS has been doing to deal with COVID.

Taya Kinsey, Assoc. Principal/Student Services, and Marcus Campbell, Asst. Supt./Principal, reviewed the wellness services and skills teachers are embedding into their classroom curriculum to help students deal with suffering and loss and what skills are needed to manage their emotions. Health and mental-health services are available through the school, as well as resources for housing, food, clothing, work for homeless families, meals, and distribution and delivery of school materials.

Families can link into evening programs concerning COVID, grief, suicide prevention, as well as academic,

college, and career planning. Teachers can also utilize new resources in classrooms and with families to foster mindfulness through the arts, virtual calmness, and managing emotions and feelings.

Maintaining equity and building a culture of caring have been an important dual focus for student services. Special education students with IEPs receive the full continuum of services for their needs. Faculty and staff have reached out continuously to students and families to help remove any barriers to student success.

Extracurricular activities and parent meetings have been reinvented and offered remotely, including publishing *The Evanstonian* student newspaper, honoring Students of the Month nominated by teachers, celebrating Spirit Week, and holding parent-teacher conferences and financial-aid nights, and much more.

Robbie Brown, Assoc. Principal/School Operations, and Clarence Gregory, Director of Operations, explained how the school is preparing to move to a hybrid model sometime this semester. While maintaining a clean environment is a constant

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Additional information, including videos and minutes of board meetings, is available on the ETHS website (www.eths.k12.il.us) under Board of Education.

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at ETHS, that has been stepped up since the pandemic hit last spring.

Updating HVAC filters, frequent cleaning of high-touch areas, installing hand sanitizers everywhere, upgrading air circulation building-wide, as well as ensuring classroom desks are six-feet apart, posting special signage (e.g., wear masks, socially distance), creating one-way hallways, among many other necessary precautions are being put in place.

Peter Bavis, Assoc. Principal/Curriculum & Instruction, explained how

teaching will be different once ETHS goes to hybrid learning. It won't be like returning to regular school. Only one-quarter of the students will physically attend school at a time, and they must wear masks and be socially distanced at all times. Teachers will be teaching in-person in the classroom to no more than one-fourth of their students while simultaneously teaching remotely. Teachers have been receiving extensive training to help them rise to the challenge of delivering their curriculum to students in class and to those at home.

School board members gave shout-outs to the ETHS faculty and staff for what they've been doing to make remote learning meaningful for students academically and socially-emotionally. They extolled the strength of the staff involvement in the lives of students when it's not easy for them to help and praised the wrap-around supports implemented by administrators and teachers that have become the norm inside and outside the classroom.

ETHS wins three national awards for financial reporting

For the 12th year, the Association of School Business Officials International awarded ETHS its Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting award for its FY 19 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (annual audit), an award earned by fewer than 10% of Illinois school districts. Also for the 12th consecutive year, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awarded ETHS their Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for having met or exceeded the program's high standards for financial reporting and accountability. ETHS was among 25 of 800 Illinois districts, and among 542 districts out of 13,506 districts in the nation to be so honored.

In addition, for the 8th straight year, the GFOA awarded ETHS its Outstanding Achievement award for its ETHS Digest: Popular Annual Financial Report (for FY 19). Only 30 districts in the entire nation received the award this year.