

**Rescue Union School District  
2390 Bass Lake Road, Rescue, California 95672**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES  
Tuesday, January 12, 2021 – 5:30 P.M.  
Rescue District Office Board Room**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-29-20, which temporarily suspends provisions of the Brown Act relating to public meetings.

The Public’s health and well-being are the top priority for the Board of Trustees of the Rescue Union School District and you are urged to take all appropriate health safety precautions. To facilitate this process, the Board of Trustees, complying with social distancing guidelines met in person and all audience participation was via Zoom.

**DISTRICT MISSION**

Rescue Union School District, in partnership with families and the community, is dedicated to the success of every student by providing a challenging, comprehensive, and quality education in a safe environment in which all individuals are respected, valued, connected, and supported.

ITEM	ITEM DESCRIPTION				
<b>CALL TO ORDER:</b>	Board president called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.				
<b>ROLL CALL:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓Nancy Brownell, President</li> <li>✓Michael Gordon, Vice President</li> <li>✓Suzanna George, Clerk</li> <li>✓Tagg Neal, Member</li> <li>✓Kim White, Member</li> <li>✓Cheryl Olson, Superintendent and Board Secretary</li> <li>✓Sean Martin, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services</li> <li>✓Dave Scroggins, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction</li> </ul>				
<b>OPEN SESSION:</b>	The meeting commenced in open session in the District Board Room.				
Welcome	The Board president provided an introduction to Board Study Session format.				
1. Adoption of Agenda (Consideration for Action)	Trustee White moved and Trustee Neal seconded to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed 5-0.				
<b>PUBLIC COMMENTS:</b>	Public comments were heard from: <table border="1" style="width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"> <tbody> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">Coleen Triana Parent</td> <td>Thanked the Board and staff for the Hybrid program, giving her children a sense of normalcy. Concerns regarding ability to social distance when returning to a more full time model. The Hybrid program is working and she does not feel now is the right time to change course. In favor of continuing in the Hybrid model.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Laura Brady Parent</td> <td>Thanked the Board and asked that they continue to honor the decision to open on January 25 in the more full time model. The cases in school are low and it has been proven there is no spread on campuses. She indicated she is not concerned about social distancing, if you are too scared, stay</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Coleen Triana Parent	Thanked the Board and staff for the Hybrid program, giving her children a sense of normalcy. Concerns regarding ability to social distance when returning to a more full time model. The Hybrid program is working and she does not feel now is the right time to change course. In favor of continuing in the Hybrid model.	Laura Brady Parent	Thanked the Board and asked that they continue to honor the decision to open on January 25 in the more full time model. The cases in school are low and it has been proven there is no spread on campuses. She indicated she is not concerned about social distancing, if you are too scared, stay
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		home. Please represent our students and community not teachers, they have representation through their union.
	Nancy Zanatta Teacher	Asked that the Board extend the Hybrid model through the end of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> trimester. Her main concerns is the lunchroom. It will be harder to social distance and with no masks while eating it puts everyone's safety at risk. Our county is in a lock down, with businesses limiting capacity, but the Board wants to fill the classrooms with minimal social distancing and it is not safe. Also concerns about face shields, not as safe as masks. Conditions can be reevaluated at the end of the trimester.
	Nicole Parent	An essential worker and wants kids back in school full time. Governor has just lifted stay at home order for Greater Sacramento, and El Dorado County has not been the problem. We are being overly cautious and it is affecting our children.
	Andrew Jones Parent	Voicing his support for continuing in the Hybrid model. It has been challenging at home but well worth it for safety. He shared his appreciation of all the effort from Board and teachers will be supportive of whatever decision the Board makes.
	Sean Scollard Parent	Expressed support for the Board and District. The Hybrid model has been working to prevent the spread of COVID, but concerned about the decrease in education for his child. Feels it is important to get back to the more full time model. Parents are not educators, always a struggle to teach your own. The spike in cases for El Dorado County mainly in So. Lake Tahoe. Supports returning to full time model.
	Alicia Parent	She expressed her gratitude for the opening of schools and all the work the teachers are doing. Supports returning to a more full time model. She has a special needs student and this environment is not working for her child. Urges the Board to stick with their decision to reopen to more full time model.
<b>GENERAL</b>		
2. CSBA Conference  (Supplement)  (Information and Discussion) Board President	<p>The Board discussed and shared information regarding individual sessions attended.</p> <p>President Brownell commented that in looking at the CSBA conference and good governance she reminded the Board of the work they did a couple of years ago (reflected on the Board placemats). The information is still valuable and relevant. Board norms have been identified, protocols/procedures and how we go about organizing ourselves, it is good to review the information. With the new year we can reflect on what we have learned at CSBA and how we hope to go forward. At this point, President Brownell shared her own personal views on recent political events.</p> <p>Trustee George shared that the sessions are still available through the end of the month and also noted that virtual attendance is available for the Masters in Governance program for Board members. She went on to comment about the session Reimagining School Marketing in the Post COVID Era.</p>	

This will help us to look at how we can market ourselves as we come out of COVID, making sure we are staying in touch with parents, community, maintaining flexibility and determine how to build on things we are already doing to deliver some new types of program. There is a huge opportunity for us.

Trustee Neal thanked cabinet and Trustee George for encouraging virtual attendance at the CSBA conference. The flexibility of the virtual conference was helpful with no distractions for the individual breakout sessions. However, Trustee Neal indicated he did not feel as connected during the general sessions. He mentioned how important the IT department becomes, particularly now with the new virtual world. Mr. Neal commented that now we can look at how to dovetail this with student learning, providing a great example of future jobs. Trustee Neal also commented on the session regarding bullying. He concluded by saying he did miss the team building and collaboration of in person attendance.

Trustee White shared that her experience was probably similar to what our families experience while sharing office space with students. She stated how she is a huge fan of CSBA, it is the Boards opportunity for continuing education. She went on to share she found out something about herself, that she learns better in person, there is more of a connection. The session that stood out for her was the one where the Board members were texting each other, there was more engagement. In addition, she participated in the legal sessions. In conclusion, she expressed how online learning can be very difficult.

Trustee Gordon shared that he did his best to get the most well rounded learning experience as a new board member and appreciated the opportunity. He commented on sessions regarding governance, finance/budget and connecting families, schools and staff with community. The session that stood out for him was also Reimagining School Marketing in the Post COVID Era.

As a teacher, he sees great value in what learning is going to look like with the new normal and we have the opportunity to recreate the new normal. Mr. Gordon commented that in this rather competitive environment how do we capture those families who will potentially be looking at new ways of learning. He stated that the question is what type of learning environment can we create in our schools from the competitive perspective for families that are looking to relocate, to choose Rescue Union. Real application learning within our classrooms allowing teachers to collaborate with our community and creating lessons to excite and introduce them to the world of different vocations that are out there.

He encouraged introducing a co-op Academy creating cooperative learning opportunities with the professional communities giving students real learning applications.

He concluded by saying he encourages our district to, beyond the great things we and staff are already doing, to be innovative during these times to separate Rescue from other districts, to one day, through these potential experiences have students choosing a career that they are passionate about.

Trustee Brownell shared her appreciation to Trustee George for the encouragement to attend the conference. She enjoyed the virtual environment and the capacity to multi-task. She felt the strands this year were very helpful. She stated her focus was on the equity sessions and found that to be helpful in exploring governance with an equity lens. She shared resource that the Board might like to explore over the course of the year. Additionally, Trustee Brownell commented on other sessions regarding the coming impacts of K-12 schools, and Board-Superintendent Relations. She shared her appreciation of the work done as a board, and for our great administrative team, leadership team, RUFT and CSEA. Lastly, she stated that we are committed collectively in our community to working through these incredibly difficult times, knowing there will be light at the

	<p>end of the tunnel. We are very appreciative of the range of communication and the capacity to really be out in front with our community about what is happening and what we are trying to accomplish.</p>
<p>3. El Dorado County School Boards Association Nominations</p> <p>(Supplement)</p> <p>(Consideration for Action)</p> <p>Superintendent</p>	<p>The Board considered nominations for the El Dorado County School Boards Association Awards Ceremony. This year the celebration will be a virtual live stream event on Monday, March 22, 2021.</p> <p>Superintendent Olson shared the names of 4 nominees submitted by our schools for Category 3: Outstanding Community Member or Volunteer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claudia Carbonell “CC” Bensley</li> <li>• Marilyn Hylton</li> <li>• Gene Harris</li> <li>• Jana Vermette</li> </ul> <p>Trustee George moved and Trustee Neal seconded to approve the nomination for all 4 individuals (Category 3) for the EDCSBA Annual Awards Ceremony. The motion passed 5-0.</p>
<p>4. COVID Update</p> <p>(Supplement)</p> <p>(Information and Possible Consideration for Action)</p> <p>Superintendent</p>	<p>The Board will receive an update on our current COVID status.</p> <p>Superintendent Olson provided updated information on our COVID status and mitigations. She began by thanking the Board members for their care and diligence in making sure they have accurate facts, data and information before making decisions regarding our district, parents for their hard work supporting their children as never before and our teachers/staff for all they have done to navigate this year.</p> <p>Mrs. Olson reported that at the December meeting the Board made the difficult decision to push back our more full reopening. They listened to our administrators, Cabinet, and took careful consideration of the data. Reviewing the trends, it was understood that for at least two weeks after every holiday, there is a significant uptick in positive cases. It would not have been prudent to begin a more full time situation during that time period after winter break.</p> <p>Mrs. Olson went on to say that we are currently in the middle of another important two-week window after New Year’s Eve. It is important for us to continue monitoring cases. We are concerned that if we put 24-30 students in a classroom right now, with the number of positive cases we are seeing in the community, we run the very real risk of a significant increase in positive cases and quarantine numbers in our schools. Vaccines for our teachers are imminent, which will help significantly. We are also expecting a new document from CDPH with new mandates/directives. We will need to look at these to be sure we are adhering to any new guidelines, not knowing what that may entail. Additionally, there are only a certain amount of substitutes available and we continue to struggle to fill positions. Thankfully, we have had a good number of parents step forward to become substitutes and we are extremely grateful. There is a hold up to get them all processed through the county office. EDCOE is not conducting fingerprinting right now due to COVID. Eventually it will be a great help to have our parents sign up, but in the meantime waiting for the process to be completed is still an issue. This is a truly a complex, difficult and challenging issue. We know our students need to be back in school fulltime and we want that, it just needs to be at the appropriate time.</p> <p>Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction provided an update on current county and district trend data. Mr. Scoggins reviewed the county dashboard and did explain that positive cases are added to the date on which the person is confirmed to be positive. The farther back in time the</p>

date, the more stable the data seems to be. Recent dates see more fluctuation as new test data comes in. The data seems to stabilize after 4-7 days of reporting and data within the last 4 or 5 days tend to under-reflect the amount of positive cases. Sizeable increases are seen as new information is reported; lag time appears to be approximately one week. Also reviewed trend data comparison between the county and district.

Superintendent Olson stated we will not know the full extent of the spike in cases from New Year's Eve until the end of the week. Additionally, the Governor has proposed legislation that would require us to offer testing to every student and every staff member every week while we are in the purple tier. This potentially would be a huge endeavor not only with manpower, but time, money and tracking the testing process. Vaccines for our staff were thought to be about 4 weeks out however we were just informed that we can start that process now and we already have many staff members signed up. She went on to say that when we remove the ability to social distance and have lunch in person, with the cohort size being well over 100 at the middle schools, there is concern that we will have to quarantine many more individuals.

The Superintendent at this point provided the Board with the Cabinet's recommendation: 1) Continue to monitor the case numbers to watch for a significant decline in positive cases over a span of at least two weeks to help determine when it makes the most sense to enter phase 2. It was recommended that the Board reassess the information at the January 26, 2021 Regular Board meeting. 2) When the District enters phase 2, it is recommended that the Board send middle school students home with bag lunches, dismissing at 12:45 instead of 1:15 until February 28, to alleviate the large numbers of students close together, without masks and without a way to distance. Because of these issues, it is important to note that if we do continue with middle school lunch periods students will have assigned seating, it will not be free time. If we indeed get to phase 3 on March 1, then our students would be in a full day situation, with lunch periods intact.

President, Brownell summarized the recommendations and the Board began discussions. Trustee Neal indicated he was appreciative of the data, and asked if anyone had any additional data to share. Mr. Scroggins did provide some preliminary numbers for January 12<sup>th</sup> that were not previously included that indicated approximately 54 new cases reported in the Cameron Park and EDH area.

Trustee White commented it is little troubling that the conversation is always about COVID numbers, and not about data on education loss, test scores, and new counseling requests. She stated our focus, is myopic, and just focused on case numbers, and our responsibility is to look at all data affecting the wellbeing and education of students. She stated in terms of data, when comparing absences for Lake Forest School last year and this year during the first week of January as students returned, there were more absences in 2020. Of the absences in 2021, 45 of those students were not ill, but quarantined. This indicates a healthier crew now than in 2020. In addition, she expressed how proud she is of our district for moving forward to open in the fall and we have done a great job. We are charged with the difficult decision to do what we think is right and not what is easy. She went on to share comments from, Dr. Fauci, Governor Newsom and NPR regarding the need for students to be back in school and that students are not major sources of transmission either to each other or to adults. She also shared information from Dimitri Christakis, Pediatrician from a recent publication, regarding the estimation of US children's educational attainment and years of life lost associated with primary school closures during the pandemic. We made the decision to reopen in August, and got it right, although there are differing opinions. She indicated concerns regarding the long-term effects on kids, always using COVID numbers and not other data that should be part of the conversation.

Michael Gordon stated as a teacher he sees first hand from students the backward steps and downward turn of their social interaction and engagement with complete distance learning. Mr. Gordon continued sharing data points, and said putting 24-30 kids back in the classroom, he understands the uncertainty, but we have another 13 days and we are hopeful the numbers trend down, making it a little more comfortable. He again mentioned the fear of potentially having schools close due to 5% criteria, and reported that our schools currently are still very far from that particular spot.

Mr. Gordon commented on a study that he found to be incredibly important. He indicated that the decision made in August was significantly more challenging, than the decision we have this evening. What we have now that we did not have then is data and science. Still challenging although not as hard, still not simple. Mr. Gordon shared an article from the Scientific Journal, Nature Communications, where 19 scientist participated in a study conducted with 9.8 million asymptomatic cases. Of those who participated in the study, 300 came back positive. Contact tracing for those 300, resulted in 1100 contacts with not one testing positive. Trustee Gordon stated that what that study shows is that people who are not demonstrating symptoms, are not transporting the virus. Given the magnitude of the study, with scientists from three countries, Mr. Gordon said he feels comfortable with what this study indicates and it makes it unlikely that asymptomatic individuals are spreading the disease.

He went on to say the decision we have made is still multiple weeks away, there is the potential for the downward trend of numbers. Teachers and students have practiced the hybrid model all year and if numbers do not continue to go in a downward trend, obviously, it is in our best interest to pivot back to hybrid for safety. Again, the numbers would need to be continuing to increase. If we have to pivot, we already know how to do the hybrid. He indicated that at this point he is not ready to reconsider changing the plan we made last month based on where we think the numbers are going to go.

Trustee Gordon went on to say that he does not believe that the description the principals have provided in preparation for the lunches at the middle schools was the intended design of introducing lunch in phase 2, not when we talked last month, but understands the need to create a safe environment. He stated that in his opinion if the lunch will be this contained model, we are better suited to implement the grab and go lunch for phase 2. Trustee Gordon also shared that when we implement phase 2 on the 25<sup>th</sup> and we don't have a lunch (with implementation of the grab and go option), and our numbers change in the negative, we can attribute that to more students on campus. However, if we implement the in person lunch option and numbers change, we won't know if it is due to more students on campus or the addition of interacting with an in person lunch period. With the plan for contained outdoor lunches, Mr. Gordon stated he would be more comfortable sending lunch home, monitoring case numbers with additional students on campus and then plan for when we could implement lunch based on how phase 2 progresses. He stated the primary purpose is increasing instruction for our kids, chooses instruction over lunch.

Trustee George thanked everyone for the information that was shared and commented that we will also have the benefit of a new administration with a roadmap to get schools open within 180 days. She went on to say that one thing we have all been crying out for is help for our schools. Schools need help, money, resources and as we struggled over the summer, working hard and creatively to do the best for our students, it is amazing what we have done with limited resources. She said she was excited to see that now not only are schools in the spotlight but starting to realize the need for social emotional learning. Trustee George indicated she considers our administrators and staff as experts regarding social emotional learning and

with the hard work of our Superintendent and team, Rescue has been building and embedding SEL into our classrooms for a number of years. It is not new for us to be sure we are looking at the social emotional welfare of our students. She continued by stating it is great that now everyone else is realizing how important this is and finally looking at this to help schools get back to the business of teaching kids. She commented that there is an opportunity to maximizing our instruction, not losing any instructional minutes just merely the grab and go lunch. It may not be optimal, but we have been and will continue to be flexible and can revisit it.

Trustee George went on to say that we took such minute care in crafting a program that was successful and we are very fortunate to live in a geographic region where we are not experiencing the 1 in 10 positivity rate as seen in Los Angeles.

Trustee George said we should continue to remain vigilant and it is disturbing to hear comments such as if you are too scared you should stay home. That is bullying and there are many families within our district that do not want their kids back in school full time. She shared her frustration, saying the adults need to act like adults so we can get kids back in school. We can't let our guard down. Thinking about how can we maintain the maximize safety standards moving forward as we did in the fall, take that risk but be successful in a very heightened environment. Also making it possible to have cleaner data, without the lunch, when reviewing numbers when returning to the more full time model.

Trustee George concluded by saying we continue to maintain our high standards that we have established and that the district has done very successfully. Then, absolutely, moving forward is the best thing for our students.

Trustee Neal expressed how proud and humbling it is to serve with the board and his hope was that we accept these outcomes and the process. In looking at everything it is very difficult to satisfy how everyone feels. The vaccines are beginning to roll out, and we have provided school choice. He indicated the risks he was willing to take certainly may not be the same risks someone else would take. We need to acknowledge all constituent in the district, but there is a large group that aren't fearful. Again, vaccines are rolling out and looking at the data he indicated that he could see nothing to change the direction that the Board has currently taken. He stated, in regard to the lunch, he can be empathetic, and appreciated Mr. Gordon's comments regarding the data and could support the direction of the Board. Lastly, he said he appreciated the comments from the community.

Trustee Brownell stated part of the concern with opening on the 25 is not so much about student transmissions as we have seen the data supporting this, but with the adults. Currently we have three principals out and still concerned about capacity for staffing as the cases may not be about children but about adults.

She stated that if we reach a threshold where we can't run the organization on the level we need to because the adults are not able to participate, that is a concern we do not have an answer for. However, if the data is trending downward over the next 10 days that would give us all more confidence. If it does not trend downward and there continues to be a number of people, even within our own school community, who are testing positive, kids and adults, I would be concerned about entering phase 2. She commented that regarding lunch and listening to middle school folks talk about potential models and organizing to help them be where they need to be at lunch, seems exhausting to think about.

In summary Trustee Brownell noted that if on one hand the decision to promote the grab and go as the model we want to implement for lunch could be made tonight, that would be helpful. In addition, there seems to be consensus about staying the course on moving into phase 2 but still monitor data and perhaps for some the data is not as important.

	<p>Trustee White stated that based on comments, it seems that we need to do something with the lunch options, we have already made a decision in terms of going back on the 25<sup>th</sup> and it does not sound like anyone wants to change that direction. She additionally commented that there is actually a third option regarding the data as students return to campus. With or without lunch there is still the possibility that any additional increased in cases could just be the fact that it is becoming more prevalent in our community and our schools are just a reflection of that.</p> <p>As a point of clarification Dave Scroggins interjected that we do have this agreement with our unions for middle school but not for elementary. However, it is somewhat easier to manage interactions at the elementary level.</p> <p>Trustee Brownell stated it is very clear for middle school but asked about the plan for elementary site in phase 2 and the expectation for lunches. Mr. Scroggins responded by saying that basically isolating cohorts in a sense that a class would eat at assigned tables with assigned seats. He continued by saying that the reality is that as cases become confirmed, we still need contact tracing and we already have mechanisms in place to do that quickly and easily. In addition, we already have play zones with designated cohort play areas.</p> <p>Trustee Gordon moved and Trustee George seconded to approve the recommendation from Cabinet for the grab and go option for middle school lunch during phase 2. The motion passed 5-0.</p>
<b>ADJOURNMENT:</b>	Trustee White moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

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Suzanna George, Clerk

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Date

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Nancy Brownell, President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Board Approved January 26, 2021*