

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF
CLAY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

A regular session of the Clay Community Schools Board of Trustees was held in the Commons of North Clay Middle School, 3450 W State Road 340, Brazil, IN 47834, on Thursday, September 9, 2021. Ryan Keller, Charley Jackson, Amy Burke Adams, Tom Reberger, Lynn Romas, Andrea Baysinger, and Michael Shaw were present.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Board President Tom Reberger led those in attendance in the pledge, and Superintendent Fritz offered the prayer.

At this time, Mr. Reberger announced there would be a slight adjustment in the agenda; the agenda is short, with only six new business items, so those will be conducted, the claims dockets will be signed, and then there will be board member comments and patron comments.

II. Consent Agenda

A. Claims

B. Board Meetings

- Regular Session Minutes for August 12, 2021
- Emergency Meeting Minutes for August 17, 2021
- Executive Session Certification for August 12, 2021

C. Field Trips

None at this meeting

D. Personnel

A. LEAVES OF ABSENCE

1. Certified

a. FMLA	CORP	Doug Lunn
b. FMLA	CCE	Kathy Collins
c. FMLA	ESE	Caitlyn Long
d. FMLA	CCHS	Pat Powell
e. FMLA	NCMS	Jason Setliff
f. FMLA	VBE	Brooke Kraemer
g. FMLA	VBE	Jaelyn Williams

2. Non-Certified

a. FMLA	CCE	Mary Lowdermilk
b. Medical	SE	Yolonda Todd
c. Not Eligible for Leave	CCE	Carrie Ley

B. RETIREMENTS

1. Certified

None

2. Non-Certified

a. Executive Secretary (effective 12/31/21)	CO	Mindy Godsey
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3. Place on Retirement Index

None

C. RESIGNATIONS

1. Certified	None	
2. Non-Certified		
a. Instructional Assistant (Life Skills)	FPE	Crystal Soots
b. Instructional Assistant	ESE	Ashli Patterson
c. Instructional Assistant (SPED)	VBE	Jaime Harden
d. Instructional Assistant	CCHS	Jamie Booe
e. Instructional Assistant	ESE	Susie Treash
f. Moved to Retirement		
g. Instructional Assistant (Title One-15 Hr)	ESE	Lynda Tomhave
h. Instructional Assistant (Title One)	FPE	Elizabeth Gibbens
i. Custodian	FPE	Erick Barnett
3. ECA Resignations		
a. 6 th Grade Boys BB	NCMS	Brad Wilson
b. 7 th Grade Girls BB	CCHS	Emily Rogers
c. Robotics	JTE	Derik Tipton
4. ECA Lay Coaches		
a. Assistant 9 th Grade FB Coach	NHS	Leroy Dickerson

D. TRANSFERS

1. Certified		
a. Elementary Teacher (from ESE)	SE	Valerie Clark
2. Non-Certified		
a. Custodian (185 day)	CCHS	Austin Graham
b. Instructional Assistant (K -29 hr)	ESE	Lynda Tomhave

E. EMPLOYMENT

1. Certified		
a. Adult Education (ESL Instructor)	GOALS	Jacob Kissinger
b. Kindergarten Teacher	CCE	Resa Horton
c. Elem. Art Teacher (60% start 8/16/21)	CCE	Staci Schafer
d. Elem. Teacher (3 rd Gr, start 8/5/21)	FPE	Piper German
e. MS Choir Teacher (start 8/5/21)	NCMS	Logan Williams
2. Non-Certified		
a. Instructional Assistant	NCMS	Amaya Jones
b. Instructional Assistant	CCE	Emily Wells
c. Removed at Principal's request		
d. IA (29-hour split position)	ESE	Ashli Patterson/Marjorie Kocher
e. Instructional Assistant	ME	Lindsey Hendrix
f. Instructional Assistant (40%)	CCE	Staci Schafer
g. Evening Custodian	CCE	Emily Stines
h. Instructional Assistant	CCE	Jeana Everhart
i. School Nurse (LPN)	CCS	Inge A. Dewig
j. Instructional Assistant (K-29 hrs)	ESE	Lynda Tomhave
k. Removed		
l. Food Service (5.5 hour)	SES	Jane Ann Garlit
m. Instructional Assistant (Title One)	FPE	Brooklyn Crowley
n. Food Service (5.5 hour)	ESE	Megan Paver

o. Instructional Asst. (Title One Preschool) ESE	ESE	Marjorie Kocher
3. Supplemental	None	
F. EXTRA-CURRICULAR		
1. Extra-Curricular Certified		
a. Yearbook Advisor	NHS	Jacob Cummings
b. Student Council (1/3 position)	NHS	Josh Trout
c. Student Council (1/3 position)	NHS	Craig Trout
d. Student Council (1/3 position)	NHS	Joni Sutherland
e. Science Dept. Chair (1/2 position)	NHS	Hannah Hughes
f. Science Dept. Chair (1/2 position)	NHS	Halee Sluder
g. Robotics (50% position)	JTE	Carrie Ames
h. Robotics (50% position)	JTE	Shelli Roembke
i. Science Fair Chair	CCE	Kasi Fields
2. Extra-Curricular Non-Certified	None	
3. Extra-Curricular Lay Coach		
a. Drill Team Director	NHS	Ashley Gonzalez
b. Asst. Drill Team Director	NHS	Tanner Wetzel
c. Marching Band Percussion	NHS	Guillermo Rameriz
d. 7 th Grade VB Coach	CCHS	Jennifer Boyll
e. Assistant 9 th Grade FB Coach	NHS	Pat Brown
4. Supplemental	None	
G. CHANGES		
1. Certified	None	
2. Non-Certified		
a. Nurse (5 to 4 days per week)	FPE	Marcy Young
b. Food Services (move to 7 hrs)	ESE	Mindy Hoopingarner
3. ECA-Lay Coaches	None	
H. VOLUNTEERS		
1. CLASSROOM		
<u>North Clay Middle School</u>		
a. Christina Issa		
2. ATHLETICS/ECA		
<u>Clay City Jr/Sr High School</u>		
a. HS Boys Basketball Volunteer	CCHS	Richard Craig Blair
b. Cheer Coach	CCHS	Clarissa Martin
<u>Northview High School</u>		
a. HS Soccer Coach	NHS	Logan Wright
<u>North Clay Middle School</u>		
a. 8 th Grade Assistant FB Coach	NCMS	Matt McCluskey
I. TERMINATIONS	None	
J. NON-RENEWAL	None	

Mrs. Adams moved to approve the consent agenda. Dr. Shaw seconded, and the motion was approved by a 7-0 vote.

IV. Old Business

A. Review of the First Weeks of the 2021-22 School Year

Superintendent Fritz stated that typically at the September board meeting he would give a short overview of the first few weeks of school during the Superintendent's Report. Each year he would usually say the same thing—smooth start, very few hiccups, no major issues—because that was how school typically would start. But in full transparency, this hasn't been a typical school year. It's been great to have students back in school, and things are running pretty much as normal as they can be. The buildings are open and in-person learning continues. He has seen a lot of great things happening in the buildings, and he has been in the buildings multiple times. Fall sports are underway, and curricular and extra-curricular activities are moving ahead.

But then there is COVID-19. The virus that started on the other side of the world in a little village in China has disrupted nearly every person in the United States and around the world, including medical professionals—especially those in critical care units and hospitals, state and local health officials, airline travel employees, military members, restaurant owners and workers, local mom-and-pop shops, national box stores, the elderly, those with compromised health conditions, and those that are perfectly healthy. It has also affected parents, especially working parents, kids, our schools—our teachers, administrators, and sports staff, as well as school board members who have to make very difficult decisions as local elected officials. Ultimately, it has impacted our most precious commodity—our students. It has impacted learning, with disruptions due to absences, positive cases, close contacts, and quarantines along with eLearning days and schools completely closed a little over a year ago by the governor's order, social/emotional learning with masking or being out of school, additional stresses at home or school, uncertainties, unknowns, fears, anxieties, and division. Every one of these impacts our students.

Twenty-three days into the 2021-22 school year, Superintendent Fritz is very happy to have students back in school and yet disappointed to be held hostage by a virus, to some extent. He is disappointed the normal start to the school year has been altered. Yet, the students have been able to stay in school, and when students are in school it is pretty much business as usual, with a lot of learning going on with direct instruction. Employees and students are doing an excellent job under some very trying conditions.

During all of this, Superintendent Fritz has met with and heard from many, with the key word being "many", parents and community members through phone calls, emails, personal visits, and at work or in the community. The vast majority, even those who do not agree with all of the plans and decisions, have had a civil and mutually respectful conversation when they are talking with Superintendent Fritz. Sometimes, they respectfully agree to disagree. Some have even said, "I don't agree with all of the decisions, but you have helped me to understand why and how the decisions were made".

Superintendent Fritz continues to hear from numerous parents. Among them are:

- ✓ Parents who disagree with close contact tracing and masks, parents who firmly believe this is infringement upon their children's rights, parents who oppose most of the COVID-19-related decisions on every front. Those parents have a voice; their concerns and opinions deserve our respect.
- ✓ Parents who, although they oppose masks in the schools, understand the local health and school officials' dilemmas and positions at the present time. These parents have a voice, and their opinions and concerns deserve our respect.
- ✓ Parents who completely support and agree with our efforts, including masks in schools. Some of these are parents whose children have no underlying health conditions at all. These parents have a voice and deserve our respect.
- ✓ Parents who completely support masks. Some of these parents have children with some underlying health conditions. Some of these are parents that have children at home that are cancer survivors, and some have a child on a trach or some other major health condition. They're worried that the very life of their child is at risk every day by COVID-19. These parents have a voice, and their concerns and opinions deserve our respect.
- ✓ Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. They are concerned about their own health and age-related conditions and are dealing with personal worries and fears about getting COVID at home. These grandparents have a voice, and their concerns and opinions deserve our respect.
- ✓ Single moms who are forced to take time off work because of contact tracing or a positive case or quarantining. They tell Superintendent Fritz it is unfair; they are right. He can hear the concern and the financial worry in their voices. These parents have a voice, and their concerns and opinions deserve our respect.

Superintendent Fritz has been sent and has reviewed information from parents and community members with convincing information on all sides, on almost every facet, both pro and con, on everything COVID-related. The recent revision to the reentry plan was not made from his desk on a philosophical or political position or political agenda. It wasn't made on a whim, nor was it made as a cure-all. Clay Community Schools is a public school, and state mandates and requirements apply to us. They come from the Department of Education, Indiana Code, Indiana Department of Health, the governor's office, and other state and federal agencies, and they have some or a great deal of jurisdiction over the school corporation and its decisions. As an example, Superintendent Fritz referenced the mask mandate on buses. He had recently received a reminder from the DOE that the mandate needed to be followed; it was a requirement. In regard to the quarantining issue, although it has been somewhat relaxed from the governor, he has been told the school corporation has to follow that. The executive order has helped a little, but only when students are masked. The change to masks made recently to the reentry plan, in simple terms, has been directed, indirectly, by the DOE and other state agencies. It's as simple as this: In this COVID-19 environment, follow the advice and recommendations of your local health officials, who in turn are following the advice of the state health officials. Superintendent Fritz noted that the local health officials are good people; they live in our community, they serve us well, and they are in a very tough spot.

Unfortunately, Clay County has remained in the “red” category on the color code map, which many would question, but the state is still using it. In addition, Clay Community Schools had several students test positive. Although we seem to be moving in the right direction, there are still difficult decisions to make. We want to keep the buildings open, and no one in this room wants normal more than the seven board members and the superintendent. All of us—as members of Clay County, as neighbors, as friends, even family members—won’t always agree, but we can try to understand others’ point of view and the positions they have because there are so many different positions and opinions in our community alone and pray that the present situation ends very soon.

Even with all the disruptions, uncertainties, disappointments, and the trials, Superintendent Fritz continues to be optimistic and positive about our schools and about this school year. He knows the community and Clay Community Schools very well. He knows Clay County, having lived here all his life. He knows our ability to overcome obstacles; we’ve done it before, and we can do it again. He knows very well our schools, our teachers, our administrators, and our support staff, and he is certain Clay Community Schools will provide its students with excellence in the classrooms, during ideal times or during difficult ones. He is positive about that.

V. Superintendent’s Report

Superintendent Fritz noted the following:

- A welcome to the school family was extended to new hires Jacob Kissinger, Resa Horton, Staci Schafer, Piper German, Logan Williams, Amaya Jones, Emily Wells, Ashli Patterson, Marjorie Kocher, Lindsey Hendrix, Emily Stines, Jeana Everhart, Inge Dewig, Lynda Tomhave, Jane Ann Garlit, Brooklyn Crowley, and Megan Paver.
- This Saturday marks the 20th anniversary of the tragic 911 event that changed our country and our world forever. It’s a good time to remember our country’s history. It reminds us of December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked, and we need to remember our military, our men and women in blue, and our first responders because they serve us well every day. We shouldn’t remember them just on 9/11, but we should remember them throughout the year.

VI. New Business

A. School Improvement Plans

Mr. Jackson moved to approve the school improvement plans. Mr. Romas seconded, and the motion was approved by a 7-0 vote.

B. Adult Breakfast/Lunch Prices for 2021-22

This adjustment was recommended for adult lunch and breakfast prices only. No adjustment was being recommended for prices for students. (Adult breakfasts will go to \$2.50, and adult lunches will go to \$4.60 in order to remain in compliance with the IDOE State Adult Meal price guidelines.)

Mr. Keller moved to approve the recommendation. Mrs. Baysinger seconded, and the motion was approved by a 7-0 vote.

C. Teacher Appreciation Grants

Superintendent Fritz explained that this was a formality required by the state. Policy 3220.01 – Teacher Appreciation Grants is already the existing policy, but the Board is required to re-approve it every year.

Dr. Shaw moved to approve Policy 3220.01 – Teacher Appreciation Grants, as written, for the distribution of the Teacher Appreciation Grant allocations for the 2021-22 school year. Mr. Romas seconded, and the motion was approved by a 7-0 vote.

D. Teacher Substitute Pay Adjustment

Mr. Jackson moved to approve the recommendation to increase substitute teacher pay by \$10 a day for the remainder of the 2021-22 school year. Mrs. Baysinger seconded.

Under discussion, Mr. Jackson asked if the increase would be retroactive back to the first day of school; it will.

The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote.

E. Teacher Evaluation Handbook Revisions – First Reading

Proposed changes to the teacher evaluation handbook are included in the board packet. No vote is required. The handbook will be brought back to the September 20 special session for a second reading and approval.

F. Title II, Title IV, and High Ability Grant Applications

Dr. Shaw moved to grant permission to complete and submit applications for Title II – Part A, Title IV – Part A., and High Ability grants. Mrs. Adams seconded, and the motion was approved by a 7-0 vote.

Prior to Board Member Comments and Comments from Patrons, a short recess was taken to allow board members to sign the necessary documents for approval of claims and board meeting minutes.

VII. Board Member Comments

Lynn Romas offered his thanks for those in attendance at the meeting and to Lynn Stoelting for all the hard work she has been doing with COVID-19.

Andrea Baysinger added her thanks to Lynn Stoelting.

Ryan Keller also thanked Lynn Stoelting and all of the other staff. He welcomed all of the new hires.

Charley Jackson welcomed the new hires. He stated that he appreciated the hard work that everybody puts in every day to make this school corporation one of the best in this area. He, too, thanked Lynn Stoelting for her hard work.

Amy Adams also welcomed the new hires and thanked the audience for coming tonight to express support for everyone's children as well as the teachers, the administrators, the support staff, and the superintendent for the phenomenal job they do for the children each and every day. She encouraged all to stay safe, and she asked that God would continue to bless our families, our schools, and our community.

Tom Reberger offered a "ditto" to the preceding comments. He added that he really appreciated the support from the community and the fact that the patrons had taken

time from their busy schedule to be at the meeting tonight and hear what the Board is doing in conducting the business of the school corporation.

III. Comments from Patrons

Beth Gibbens, an instructional assistant at Forest Park Elementary, shared that she loved her job working with children every day. She helps out in the classroom, interacts with student during lunch and recess, and teaches if her teacher doesn't have a substitute. She goes home every day knowing that she has made an impact on their lives. With that being said, tomorrow will be her last day with this corporation, not because she doesn't love her job, but because she couldn't afford to love it any more. This is her ninth year with this corporation; her starting pay had been \$9.25, which had been pretty good nine years ago. She deemed it to be almost a laugh now. She asserted the school corporation was losing wonderful staff members because they can go somewhere else for more money. She pointed out that instructional assistants are expected to do their work but keep getting things added on. They are also expected to keep up with technology in order to help kids with their Chromebooks but are given very little training. In addition, they are expected to teach the class when no substitutes show up, for just \$15 extra when they are actually doing two jobs on those days. She did not think instructional assistants should be getting their paycheck with a Medicaid eligibility form. She was only speaking for IAs, not for cafeteria workers, custodians, maintenance, or other staff. She concluded her comments with the hope that her comments wouldn't fall on deaf ears. As she saw it, the school corporation needed to think about paying more in wages before more great employees left for better-paying jobs.

Cheryl Schopmeyer referenced a special session meeting in August that had been called for the purpose of voting on mask protocols. She had been very perplexed and saddened because the parents were not allowed to speak. (NOTE: Patron Comments are a part of the Regular Session agendas; however, Special Session agendas are specific to the business to be conducted by the Board and therefore do not include an item for patron comments.) Also, there had been one board member who had made a very unprofessional gesture to parents, which she believed was totally unacceptable. She asserted that other school boards in Indiana get the same information as this school board, yet they had voted down mask mandates. She asked what was really being taught to children by forcing them to comply with draconian mask mandates, giving several examples of lessons they might learn that were very concerning to her. It was her assertion that wearing masks lowers the immune system, the very thing kids need to fight off infection. She deemed the mask requirement to be medical tyranny; freedom to choose must be protected, for every parent, for every child. On another note, Ms. Schopmeyer asked if the school corporation observed Constitution Day. Superintendent Fritz's response was that the day was observed by each school having a program they develop on their own, either in the classroom or school-wide. He noted that he had been invited to attend one of the schools for that very event on Friday, September 17th. Mr. Reberger added that this had been done for years.

Erin Moore stated that she had been so proud of the board members who had the courage to stand up and vote on behalf of their freedom at the last meeting, and she thanked them for that. She next read a prepared statement. During this, she

commented that all were taxpayers, and if they were not happy with the product or service their children were receiving, why were they still paying. She encouraged those unhappy with the mask requirement to find out what their child was worth as an enrolled student in a public-school system. She urged parents unhappy with the product or service they were receiving to take decision-making power back into their own hands, mentioning the school funding cut-off date of September 17. Ms. Moore then shared that she used to have three kids in the Clay Community school system; now she is a full-time homeschool mom, which she considers her peaceful protest, and she would love to have others join her.

P. J. Nicoson commented that he wanted to thank the Board for voting for the masks. He mentioned South Vermillion and Vigo County as other school systems in which students are wearing masks.

Mr. Reberger shared the Board's appreciation for the comments of all of the patrons and the fact that we live in America and have the right to our opinion and the right to share it. He then referenced a comment made by Superintendent Fritz earlier in the meeting: that is a freedom we will never give up.

VIII. Future Agenda Items

None at this meeting

Prior to adjournment, Mr. Reberger addressed the patron comment that had been made by Beth Gibbens, noting that the Board was aware of the concern that she had, and that is something the Board has had preliminary discussions about; he thought she would see that it was going to be addressed. To Ms. Gibbens, he stated that if she loved her job, she would need to look at what would be done this fall and see if she wanted to come back.

IX. Adjournment

Having exhausted all agenda items, the meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

The meeting was audio recorded, and copies may be requested by contacting the Central Administration Office.