



Project Impact STEM Academy

Invested in the life-long pursuit of knowledge.

September 1, 2020

Chairman Report

As a board we have always strived to remain consistent, fair, and transparent in all that we do. In keeping with that, I wanted to take just a minute and discuss the current status and Pi STEM's COVID plan.

The plan that was put in place was developed with input from many sources and stakeholders; including students, parents, staff, the State Department, our attorneys, and the Health District. There were a vast number of factors to consider, and it took many weeks to develop the plan we have in place.

We want our families, staff, and students to know we do hear you...your concerns and your frustrations, as we continue to navigate in a virtual environment. Many of us are also parents, work outside the home, and share in similar struggles.

Our goal has been, and continues to be, to resume in-person, at school, classes – in minimally a hybrid-type schedule. This can, and will, happen once the Central District Health advises that it is safe to do so. As the plan outlines, we will need 2 consecutive ratings of yellow, or better, before we make the transition from full virtual learning.

While I cannot address every aspect of the plan in tonight's meeting, I did want to address just a few common questions I have received...

"How can children go to places like Roaring Springs and be safe, but not to class at Pi STEM?"

I am not a medical professional, so I won't even attempt to directly answer this. Instead, I can explain what we as a board used in our determination for remaining in virtual learning during a red category. Idaho Statute, and many other states, places a higher responsibility on schools for the safety and wellbeing of a child than are required of any other type of business. It states in code that schools are in loco parentis, literally meaning "in the place of the parent." As such, the school is required to do what any parent might do to protect the health of their child. We believe the school's plan does protect the health and safety of each student as a parent would.

“Why is Pi STEM not doing what Kuna School District is doing?”

Kuna School District, at least the last I was aware, is allowing a hybrid model of on-site and online classes. I cannot speak to the decisions made by their school board, but instead can discuss why Pi STEM does not have this option. The short answers are resources, safety and liability.

First and foremost, as a very small school, we simply do not have the resources to manage concurrent online and on-site classes. We have some pretty amazing staff, but this is too much of an ask even for them.

There is also the safety and liability concern. As much as I wish “liability” wasn’t a factor to consider, it is. As a very small school we could not carry the financial burden a suit could bring to the school. The recent legislative action does not protect the school from being sued. And if such a case was brought against us, we would be required to defend any decision we made to go against the advisement of the Central Health District recommendations. It is possible that providing families the choice to attend fully online (and not come on campus at all), might not be considered going against the CDH advisement. However, as I previously mentioned, Pi STEM does not have the resources to provide such an option.

I understand this has been a difficult time in many ways, for many families. And I again want to say we are listening.

A few key points stick out to me from our mission statement... “adaptive”, “integrated”, “practice failure”, and “life-long”. As we continue to work through these unprecedented times, I hope that we will continue to focus on the good that can be found in our struggles. These include the development of life-long skills such as adaption, collaboration and integration, and overcoming our struggles.

Go Dinos!

Sincerely,

Teresa Fleming

Pi STEM Board Chairman