



Summary: Dayton & Waitsburg Virtual Community Roundtable Thursday, August 13, 2020

Panelists

Guy Strot, *Superintendent Dayton Public Schools*
Mark Pickle, *Superintendent Waitsburg Public Schools*
Martha Lanman, *Columbia County Public Health*
Jim Pearson, *Director The Club*
Jennie Dickinson, *Executive Director Port of Columbia*
Shane McGuire, *Director Columbia County Health System*
Chrisann Christensen, *Blue Mountain Counseling*

Moderator

Jacqueline Lonning, *Collective Impact Coordinator for the Educational Attainment Alliance and United Way of the Blue Mountains*



Joy Smith, former President of the Waitsburg Commercial Club, welcomed community members to the Roundtable and introduced the conversation. She introduced Jacqueline Lonning, Collective Impact Coordinator for the Educational Attainment Alliance.

Jacqueline Lonning briefly described the Educational Attainment Alliance, which seeks to improve educational outcomes for everyone, from cradle to career. Educational Attainment Alliance leadership has been grappling with the uncertainties that this fall brings, and through these conversations aims to: share up-to-date information with community members, provide a space to ask questions and share concerns, and lay a foundation for collaborative action.

Guy Strot, Superintendent Dayton Public Schools

Superintendent Strot explained that because Columbia County has low rates of COVID activity, and because the schools have very large classrooms (average classroom is 800-900 square feet) where students can be distanced, Dayton Public Schools will open on time and all students will be able to attend everyday. Dayton Public Schools will also offer a fully distance-learning option for students who may have an underlying condition, or live with someone with an underlying condition. Students doing distance learning will be expected to keep up with the material so they are ready to matriculate to the next grade on time.

Registration is the week of August 10 and 17, and if parents have not already been contacted by the Dayton School District, they are asked to contact the district to set up an appointment to register their student.

There will be no fall sports, and COVID activity will be assessed later this fall to determine if there will be winter sports. Football and volleyball are scheduled to start in spring, but that will also depend on rates of COVID infections - not just in Dayton and Waitsburg, but also in districts where teams play.

To keep Dayton schools open, Superintendent Strot emphasized the importance of wearing masks and staying socially distanced. He noted that if there were five or six infections in Dayton, schools would need to go fully remote.

The Dayton School District has posted a plan on Facebook and on its website: <https://www.daytonsd.org/>, which Superintendent Strot will update it each Monday. Contact information is included, and parents are encouraged to reach out if they have questions.

Mark Pickle, Superintendent Waitsburg Public Schools

Because Waitsburg is part of Walla Walla County where COVID activity is high, Waitsburg schools will be 100% remote upon opening on September 8. COVID activity will be reassessed in mid-October, and if it is significantly lower, the district will consider operating a hybrid schedule where students spend some time at school in person.

The district is in the process of finalizing middle school and high school schedules, which will be released on Monday, August 24. During that week, middle and high school students will register. The district intends to provide chromebooks to each student (k-12) prior to the start of school.

The elementary school will operate a “soft-start,” which will involve holding parent/teacher conferences during the first week/week and a half so that students and parents can meet their new teachers, get oriented to the new remote learning system, and get their chrome books.

Martha Lanman, Columbia County Public Health

Martha Lanman provided an update on COVID activity in Columbia County:

- total tested: 459
- negative: 441
- pending: 1
- deaths: 1
- positive and recovered: 12
- out of county positive and recovered (people tested in Columbia County and connected to a Columbia County case): 4
- number of cases in the last 14 days: 0

COVID tests are performed at the hospital in Dayton, and activity data is posted on the County Public Health's website: <https://www.columbiaco.com/> and facebook page. More COVID-19 data can be found at: <https://www.coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/covid-19-risk-assessment-dashboard>

According to Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) guidelines, in order to open schools there needs to be less than 25 positive cases per 100,000 residents, which in Columbia County means there can only be a couple of positive cases. Right now there are no cases and so schools can open with full attendance. Because Dayton has a small population, a few cases impact the ratio significantly, and therefore decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

Keeping schools open depends on whether or not new cases are connected to kids at school. If not, Columbia County Public Health will analyze the situation and have a conversation about whether or not it is safe to remain open.

Two unrelated cases in the school will be considered an outbreak. If that happens, Columbia County Public Health will conduct contact investigations to determine if the school needs to be closed. All contact investigation is done by Columbia County Public Health nurses and trained community members. If someone has been in direct contact with a positive case, they will need to stay home for 14 days, and someone from public health will call them once per day to check on them and provide resources such as food, and housing if necessary.

To keep the community safe, residents are asked to stay close to home, be aware of how close they are to others, and wear a mask. It takes only one person to spread the virus through the community. Columbia County Public Health has 30,000 cloth masks available, and residents are encouraged to come by and pick some up, or call. The schools have masks as well.

Jim Pearson, Director of The Club

The Club is a youth recreation program (not a licensed childcare facility) that provides school-age kids (ages 4-18) a safe place to gather, socialize and learn. The Club seeks to promote self-discovery, social and emotional health, and positive relationships between adult staff and youth. The Club operates on a very small budget, with one full-time staff member and 4 part-time staff members. To attend programs at The Club, youth need to become a member, which costs \$20 per year. Current membership is over 200, and before COVID, about 30-40 kids attended the afterschool program on a daily basis. The Club serves youth in Dayton and Waitsburg.

The Club is currently closed and staff are working on rolling out virtual programming that will include an on-line component and hands-on components. Plans may include delivering STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) activity kits that can be done at home, and providing an on-line component that allows kids to engage from a distance. The Club leadership recognizes that while face to face interaction is preferable to a distance program, safety and

financial considerations make it the best option for now. The Club's board of directors intends to assess the situation within four weeks of Dayton schools opening, and determine whether or not in-person programming is feasible. Updated information will be posted on the website: theclubdayton.org

Jennie Dickinson, Executive Director Port of Columbia

During the pandemic, the Port of Columbia has been coordinating and helping businesses with grant funds. Thus far, 25 businesses have received funds through a \$150,000 grant, including 3 daycares (one daycare chose not to take the grant and closed). Currently, a second round of grant funds are being made available through CARES Act money from the City of Dayton (\$76,000), the State of Washington (\$120,000), and private funds from the Innovia Foundation (\$225,000). In providing grants, the Port is prioritizing businesses of 10 employees or less, and grants provide operational support. Jennie noted that the federal unemployment program that just expired was very helpful, as was the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) that is about to expire. She expressed a need for additional government funding to support businesses and employees.

There are currently two licensed daycares in Dayton - Demaris Day Care and Susan's Home Daycare. Lacy Nichols is planning to reopen Hogeys Hollow daycare this fall, and may offer after school tutoring. Daycares are not able to stay open if they do not have enough enrollment; enrollments declined in spring when parents kept their children home to keep them safe, or sought cheaper options because of lost wages due to layoffs. Jennie noted that it takes about five children to support an in-home daycare, and eight to make it pay. Lack of availability of childcare is difficult for employees, and Jennie suggested that there may be a need for funds to keep daycare slots open so that providers can stay open and there are spots available in case families need them for a short term. Jennie also noted that there is a round of funding coming from the state for nonprofit organizations, which may be of some help. She also suggested that if there are parents whose children need extra tutoring and cannot afford it, there may be a way to find extra funds to help support that. She suggested that this is a conversation that needs to continue. Community members are encouraged to visit the Port of Columbia's website: <https://www.portofcolumbia.org/> and sign up for the Port's newsletter.

Shane McGuire, Director Columbia County Health System

The Columbia County Health System is the largest employer in the community with 176 full-time employees. The pandemic has forced innovation within the health care sector, including virtual visits, virtual care, and home offices so that some employees can work remotely. Because the Health System provides essential and emergent care, there were no furloughs or job cuts. The Health System is a government agency, and as such is highly regulated by a variety of oversight agencies.

The Columbia County Health System works with Dayton and Waitsburg schools to provide immunizations and consult on matters of public health. In the spring, Dayton School District, The Club, and the Columbia County Health System worked together to provide care for the children of first responders. The Health System is currently looking to expand childcare services for

healthcare professionals. This is challenging because healthcare professionals work three shifts, seven days a week and all nurses work 12hour shifts. They are open to working with partner agencies to expand childcare capacity in the community.

Shane noted that working in the COVID environment where guidelines are shifting creates stress, and behavioral health has become a concern. In terms of physical health, wearing a mask is effective, even if it may not be popular. He noted that Columbia County has a very vulnerable population - 28% of residents are over 65. For most people, when they reach 65 they have at least one underlying health condition, and many in this area have three or four. Therefore, it is imperative that people maintain safe distancing and be aware of their neighbors. The Columbia County Health System website: <http://cchd-wa.org/> and facebook page provide information about coronavirus.

Chrisann Christensen, *Blue Mountain Counseling*

Drawing on information shared by Wayne and Tasha (Dayton's school counselors and employees of Columbia County Health System), Chrisann provided an overview of mental health concerns. She noted that they are seeing more children with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and self-harm. She noted that many families are struggling, and kids are often on the receiving end of that. Kids are complaining of headaches, stomach aches, and sleep difficulties. The Department of Health has a Behavioral Health Tool Box (<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/BHG-COVID19-FamilyToolbox.pdf>), which provides good ideas for all youth from small children to teens. She noted that there are four components of resilience, and indicated that it applies to adults as well as youth:

- being flexible and adapt to change;
- having strong connections with others;
- feeling a sense of purpose in their life and their days;
- feeling a sense of hope.

Chrisann noted that they are also seeing an increase in depression, anxiety, and substance abuse among adults. Families are struggling financially, mentally, and emotionally. To address these challenges, parents can:

- make time for themselves and their families;
- create and stick to routines;
- make sure kids get 8-10 hours of sleep each night;
- limit screen time;
- share meal time;
- get exercise - walk and bike

People with underlying conditions, the elderly, small children, and those who struggle to make ends meet or meet their daily needs are especially vulnerable. Lack of other supports, such as childcare, make families more vulnerable. Chrisann noted that Blue Mountain Counseling is open and provides mental health, substance abuse counseling. They offer a safe place to talk and can help people navigate these difficult times.

Aging and Long Term Care 509-382-4787

Planning/support for seniors/adults with disabilities, caregiver support, case management

Blue Mountain Counseling 509-382-1164

Mental health, substance use, tele-health

Columbia County Hospital District 509-382-2531

Mental health, primary care

Columbia County Public Health 509-382-3949

WIC, food benefits, health-related information

YWCA 509-382-9922

Domestic violence, shelter

Comprehensive Mental Health Walla Walla 509-524-2920

Suicide Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255

WA Listens 1-833-681-0211, Walistens.org

Crisis line referrals, non-clinical psycho-education service

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Q & A

Q: *If a child in Dayton tests positive for COVID, what is the plan?*

Strot: If a student goes home sick, they will be encouraged to call their doctor and get tested. At that point it is no longer a school district issue but a public health issue and the schools follow the advice and counsel of Marth Lanman.

Lanman: The child would get tested at the hospital. Test results go to Columbia County Public Health, who would call the parents. Then we'd start a case investigation of who they were around two days before they felt sick, and when they felt sick. We would ask a series of questions for the child/parents, get a list of people with whom they had contact within 6 feet for over 15 minutes (teachers, classmates, janitors, etc). Those people would be considered direct contacts, as would everyone in the household. Those people would all be on 14 day quarantine. Then we would have conversations with the schools.

Q: *There have been concerns about privacy with the temperature scanning method in Dayton schools, can you address that?*

Strot: We have three machines, one for elementary school, one for middle school, one for high school. They are brand new, and the company has no capability to connect those machines to the network, they are stand alone. It would store the student's face, which we already have in our system, and their temperature. It is a good system to take a temperature but the process

to figure out who has walked past and get a report is not good, and I can't connect a printer to the system. We will start with two people at each station - one person to verify temperature and one person to click name off on a sheet of paper as a way to verify that everyone has had their temperature checked.

Q: What are the COVID trends in Walla Walla County where Waitsburg is, and how does that relate to school reopening?

Lanman: We'd have to go to the dashboard and look at the numbers (<https://coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/covid-19-risk-assessment-dashboard>). There was an outbreak at the corrections facility which has affected Walla Walla County's numbers in the last week or so, and the numbers there have continued to go up. They are in Phase 2, Columbia County is in Phase 3.

Q: What supports are available for more vulnerable populations or who have higher needs when learning goes remote?

Strot: That depends on the guidelines that we get from DOH and OSPI. If we can bring small groups to school we will. With the current plan, middle and high school students will finish at 12:30, so won't have lunch on campus. We will have a plan in place to provide additional supports for students who need them from 1:00-3:00.

Pickle: We are working on our plans right now. We can bring in small groups of students (2 or 3 at a time) for extra support, and we are working right now to communicate with those families to bring them to campus.

Q: We have heard that some parents are considering forming "pods" - getting kids together and hiring a private tutor or teacher. We can imagine that extra support would be beneficial, but how do we provide such supports for all students, not just those who can afford it?

Strot: It would be a matter of matching students with resources. We can't send staff to work in a pod in a house, but we have expertise and resources we can bring to bear if we have to shut the school down. I'll come up with a list of resources, and if folks want to work on that they can certainly reach out to me.

Pickle: We would follow what Superintendent Strot was talking about: putting together parent and student resources on our website, providing links to resources that our teachers are using, such as Kahn Academy and other instructional supports.

Lanman: If people are forming pods, want to encourage them to follow social distancing guidelines, and keep kids within their grades. We are open to having discussions if people have questions about that, and if they want to see guidelines to set pods up safely.

Q: What are the concerns of having kids on screens for long periods of time, be it for distance learning or entertainment? What are alternatives to lots of screen time?

Pearson: We are looking at an at-home hands-on component to add to our virtual club, along the lines of a monthly subscription service that has a STEM or STEAM activity, that is age-appropriate, with all the supplies and instructions to do it. It's not just to keep kids away from too much screen time, but also to accommodate members of The Club that don't have access to computers and the internet.

Pickle: Devices issued by the Waitsburg School District will be "scrubbed" and will have restrictions that prevent students from accessing certain sites. Common Sense Media (<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>) provides a lot of information about 'smart use' and digital citizenship that parents and guardians might find very useful.

Christensen: Kids have become sophisticated about spending time on screen because there is a lack of other things to do. Learning through screens is a different kind of screen time (than games, social media, shows), but the time on the screen still needs to be broken up because spending time on screens all day can be mentally and physically exhausting. Screens can be used to reduce social isolation, but there are also predators and misinformation. Adults should also limit their screen time; it's all about balance.

Q: Will food service continue if schools are shut down?

Pickle: Yes. Students will be able to access free lunch. In Waitsburg we will utilize bus service to deliver meals to homes like we did last spring.

Strot: All high school students will get lunch to go at 12:30 at release. If they are staying on campus until 2:00, they can stay and do some school work and take the bus home. Students can eat in the library at 12:30 in a socially distanced manner, work there, or work with individual teachers.

Q: Can community members help with deliveries if The Club does a distanced model?

Pearson: Yes! You can contact Jim if you want to volunteer to get materials out to students. Contact information: director@theclubdayton.org

A project of the Educational Attainment Alliance, facilitated by United Way of the Blue Mountains and Community Council.