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Orinda Intermediate School survey reveals continued disagreement on return to school

By Sora O'Doherty

Stacy Wayne, Principal of Orinda Intermediate School, presented the results of a return to school survey of OIS students, parents and staff at the Oct. 14 school board meeting. In general, students and teachers were more aligned in their responses, and parents less so.

While parents tended to want a return to school for all six periods per day, teachers and students did not favor that option. Students and staff were more positive than parents about the OIS session cycle

model, which involves two classes per session of distance learning.

All groups were in agreement with the small cohort size in the synchronous Zoom sessions. Students, staff and parents were largely in agreement that both synchronous sessions and asynchronous work are relevant and engaging, with the majority of both students and parents thinking that the amount of asynchronous work is appropriate and staff largely feeling that the asynchronous work being assigned is appropriate to cover the content and essential standards. However, a

sizable minority, about a quarter, of parents or guardians think that there is not enough asynchronous work.

While students said that they feel a sense of connection to their classmates, their parents and guardians strongly disagreed. Both stated that they would like more opportunities for students to meet with friends and classmates for clubs, sports and other activities.

Regarding willingness of teachers and staff to return to school and their preferences about timing, the majority favored continuing distance

learning until the end of the school year. If that isn't possible, their next choice would be to return in March and less favorable would be to return in January.

Of teachers and staff asked about their intentions to return to school, 41.4% of teachers reported that they would return to work on campus and another 28.3% agreed to work on campus, but preferred not to. While only 7.6% cannot return to school owing to a medical condition, 22.8% said they would have to discuss the matter with the principal. Classified staff numbers were simi-

lar, although the return from staff was lower.

Board member Carol Brown expressed how hard this decision is. "I think we're not supposed to be governing by survey," she said. "Surveys are useful in finding out about feelings and health issues, but we are the ones who are supposed to be deciding this. This is what we signed up for, whether we anticipated this or not." Brown wants to have a decision by the end of October. Another meeting was scheduled for Oct. 26, after press time.

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OUSD board excited about new cameras in classrooms ... teachers not so much

By Sora O'Doherty

New cameras in the classroom could mean that teachers could teach those on campus and those at home at the same time, in theory, according to the Orinda Union School District board, which did a test run with the camera at its Oct. 14 meeting. This could cut a teacher's work

load by up to half, but teachers had a different view of having their work constantly available to the eyes of all parents.

To test the poly student camera, OUSD IT Director Bobby Bardenhagen set one up in the boardroom. Board president Cara Hoxie and board member Jason Kaune were in the boardroom during the meeting. They

wore masks and sat far apart. Bardenhagen explained that the camera is very easy to set up, it plugs into a computer via USB and is, he said, literally plug and play. Cara Hoxie said that the sound quality was very good, and Superintendent Carolyn Seaton and board member Carol Brown agreed that the sound was really incredible. The

speaker view is around 120 degrees. It is not a 360 degree angle because of privacy issues. The audio can be muted or the video stopped as well. Board member Hilary Weiner inquired if there was any lag, and Bardenhagen explained that it is not connected to the internet but plugged in directly, like a gigantic version of a web cam. Be-

cause it is hard-wired, it eliminates a lot of lag, he said.

Teachers, however, approached the idea with less enthusiasm. Charles Shannon, president of the Orinda Educators Foundation, said that the fact that parents can observe teachers all day in the classroom causes them anxiety.

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