

Class D Brick and Mortar Town Hall Meeting 9/24/2020

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Mark Arnold, American Driving School

Angie Luti, A & J Driving Academy, A & J Driving Academy II

Randy Simmons, Right Way Driving School

Jeff Caldwell, Professional Driving Systems Driving School

Fran Tomba, Advanced Driving School

Ruth Diehl, Ruth's Driving School

Danielle Spino, Toledo Driving School

Kay Ruen, Always Right Driving School

Donna Golec, Your Choice Driving School

Lisa Harris, Superior Driving School

Topic 1: Virtual Classrooms

Stacey: This is kind of new for all of us and came about due to the current pandemic situation. We are now offering the virtual classroom. Those of you who offer it can you please tell us how that's going for you?

Ruth: We've been doing the virtual since late April, it has been a learning curve. We do our course through Zoom. I am getting more and more comfortable with it. I think it is a viable option. What I am finding is that students are so conditioned to doing things online that they are getting too comfortable. We are having to bring them back to reality a little bit. For example I asked a question about a work

sheet the students had with them and I wasn't able to really get a response from them because they weren't paying attention. I made them re-watch the corresponding video and they still couldn't answer, so I made them watch it bit by bit and I was finally able to get an answer and discussion out of them. I think they are just too conditioned to information in and information out. I think that it is nice that we can really have a discussion even though we aren't in a physical classroom.

Stacey: So I think some pain points are classroom management and keeping everyone engaged?

Ruth: Yes.

Danielle: I think that we aren't really having those problems, but we have had to make an adjustment to our break times to make them longer. I think there a lot of kids who are excelling doing this virtually because of various reasons. They are thriving in their own home environment rather than in a classroom. I think it is just hard when they're doing all day school and then right into four hour classroom sessions they just need a break.

Tom: I think our classrooms are going well. We have about four instructors doing virtual now. One thing I would caution instructors about is that if we don't have set rules about the appropriateness of where they are taking their classroom instruction as well as letting parents know the rules, that instructors are going to be able to see into their rooms and others are going to as well. I want to say that instructors need to be careful about what they comment on in these situations.

Stacey: How do you guys feel about this permanently being an option in rule?

Ruth: I think it is a viable and good option, I think it should be a part of what we can do. Going back to what Tom said, I saw a post on social media that said parents need to understand that when they walk through in pajamas or having a cocktail in the background everyone can see that and we need to make sure that parents know that everyone in these classrooms can see them. I have been doing this for a long time, and when we started talking about being able to do virtual this year it was definitely a learning curve for me and probably a lot of schools.

Tom: Pandemic or not I think this is a very good option. Like Danielle said this is a very good option for kids who still want and need a live instructor but don't do well in a classroom setting. I think with the rules it will be hard to address all of the technology issues, but I know that you are all up to that in the office. I just hope that everyone gets to have a say.

Mike: I just want to chime in as an organization that is not doing it, but I would be on board with seeing it in the rules.

Fran: How are the final assessments being handled via the virtual option?

Danielle: We use a platform called Edulastic that makes the student use a split screen or second device, and it is working out very well. We make the kids stay upright and off mute to make sure no one is feeding answers. If anyone has any questions please contact me.

Tom: We are using PowerPoint and Zoom and going one question at a time and as long as our class sizes are small it is working out very well.

Ruth: For the final test, we have the student come in to take the final test. We have someone proctoring it to them, and then we also have the students signing rosters as well to make sure the paperwork is taken care of. It is also a chance to talk with them one on one about any concerns they have.

Kay: I think virtual classroom is great and I hope it continues.

Topic 2: Students can do behind the wheel after two hours of training

Stacey: It is in rule that students have to complete two hours of training in the classroom before they can complete any behind the wheel training. Just some background, on the online side, it is in Ohio Revised Code, or law, that this has to be done. Not that laws cannot be changed, but it would take a little more time.

Donna: I think they need more than two hours. I think they need to be fifty percent completed across the board.

Tom: I think they need to be completed with their classroom. I think the student would be much better prepared to be behind the wheel. I think that students are not getting any behind the wheel training with parents, but will only do those two hours and get that certificate and then come in and drive and not do anymore until they are done with their behind the wheel. I think that for brick and mortar this works as well because it's straight two weeks of classroom most of the time and then they can get into the car. I have talked with a lot of the instructors who blame the online schools, but really it is because the parents don't want to drive those fifty hours with the student.

Fran: I totally agree with Tom, I have made it a statement on our website that it is school policy that they need to be done with their full classroom before they can drive.

Ruth: I agree with getting the whole program done. I don't have the opportunity to do all of the administrative things that I want to do. I can tell 10 minutes into a drive whether or not they took online or brick and mortar. I can say that it is easy to tell an online student because we are teaching so much on the fly in the car. If we cannot change the two hour rule, can we switch around the online curriculums to make it so that signs, signals, and lights are taught first before they get into a car?

Jeff: I am kind of with Tom, we used to sign up after four hours and it got to the point where we cannot allow the kids to do any behind the wheel until all of their classroom is finished. It think it builds a foundation and also keeps students and parents accountable.

Randy: I think that it should be at least 12 hours, and I also think that the curriculum needs to be changed around to address the in car portions before all of the other information. I also think that it would solve the problem with kids who are doing their online and not finishing before their drives are finished.

Mark: I am going to go back to what Ruth said, you can definitely tell who is online and who is brick and mortar. There are a lot of kids who just click through their online. I can also say that we have a lot of students who are sitting here waiting on their online completion certificate. I also want to say that the entire 24 hours encompasses all of the risks of the road. I don't understand how we can take kids out and they don't know the entirety of the risks of the road. We have gotten in the car with a kid a lot lately and they don't have any behind the wheel time with parents. We have to tell instructors that if the student is really scared or has no experience then keep them in a parking lot and talk the parent into

getting into the car with them. The problem is that if we don't have it in rule and we just make it a school policy then they will just go to our competitor.

Mike: I wholly support having all of the 24 hours before they can do any behind the wheel. I also have a lot of files where they are waiting on online certificates. I also think that it would help the certificate issue if we just get the 24 hour requirement before driving into law. I will say this, it is a lot of money for driver's education. It is a waste of money if we have to spend 2-4 hours in a parking lot just getting them used to being behind the wheel. It really helps us when we explain to parents that if we have to spend a ton of time teaching the basics then they aren't getting their money's worth.

Jeff: You can stretch drives out to make sure parents are driving with students.

Stacey: Do you have issues getting kids done within that 180 day requirement?

Everyone: No.

Ruth: The only caveat I see to that is that students will stretch out that classroom before trying to schedule drives. I think we need to put a 90 restriction on how long they have to get their classroom done.

Donna: As far as the book work, if they do brick and mortar, they have six months total. If they do online they have six months for book work and six months for behind the wheel. I want to make sure I am understanding that right.

Stacey: Yes.

Donna: We have always said they need to have half their driving hours in with parents, but we can still tell if they do not.

Mike: If you change the 24 hour rule, we are going to have procrastinators no matter what. I think if you change the rule to 24 hours required completion then you are going to be benefitting the mass rather than those few who would procrastinate no matter what the rule is.

Randy: I feel like the 24 hours either needs to be changed to a 3 month limit or all of the driving schools in the local area need to work together to let each other know that certain students should not be getting behind the wheel with any school.

Mark: I want to talk about kids skipping their classes. We have a limited amount of seats in their classroom. So if we have to hold the student's place we cannot charge another student. It is bad business when we have to do that. We have a policy that goes home with the student on the first day and has to be signed by a parent that says if they miss one of their classes and we cannot hold a place the next month then you will need to have a one on one session with an instructor and we will charge \$25 per hour. Same with behind the wheel cancellations. I think if we adopt a policy that nips the procrastination in the bud then we wouldn't have so many problems.

Topic 3: Probationary instructor process

Stacey: It is in the Ohio Revised Code/Ohio Administrative Code and we do require a 180 day probationary period. What are the good and bad points of this?

Mike: I have no problem with the probationary period and I like the current set up. It gives me the opportunity to give the probationary instructor a set amount of time to grow and learn their trade before we actually decide whether or not they are really cut out for this job.

Tom: I don't disagree with Mike at all, but I think it should be up to the individual business. I think less regulation from the state is needed here. I think that it should be up to the business to make sure their instructors are doing well.

Jeff: I also believe that less regulation is needed. I think each individual business is different and we train differently and we do things differently. I think we need to retain the right to train and decide on our instructors ourselves.

Mark: I am going to agree with Tom. The only thing I see out of the probationary requirement is that there is a six month evaluation and it just makes more work for your office and our office. We are constantly sitting down with new instructors to gauge how their training went, how they are doing after they are on their own on probation, and even once they are fully licensed. I think that the one year evaluation is enough and none of us want to put bad instructors out on the road. It is nothing but extra paperwork for your office.

Ruth: I see the whole picture. While I agree that the extra paperwork is a hassle, it is good for me to have that extra reminder to really sit down and check in on my instructors and make sure they are doing everything they need to be.

Mike: Just piggybacking, we go above and beyond the training as it is. I don't think an instructor is ready to get in the car after 16 hours of observation only, so we make them do more. I don't need the regulation and the rule because we are going to do that no matter what. I also know that for every school that goes above and beyond there are others who are pencil pushing and getting the instructors out.

Danielle: My only recommendation on the rule would be to split the license because we have a lot of people who don't want anything to do with classroom or anything to do with behind the wheel. It really isn't fair to those instructors who want nothing to do with a classroom setting to initially train them and then six months later come back and say do it again without any experience because they are only doing behind the wheel training.

Mark: I totally agree with Danielle. I think we have talked about this before. I really am in support of splitting licenses. I would like to see a whole meeting addressing splitting licenses.

Stacey: Can everyone send me their thoughts on this topic?

Everyone: Yes.

Stacey: Probationary licenses are in the Ohio Revised Code, so it is in law, not just Ohio Administrative Code, which is fairly easy to change. We can definitely take a look at this, but it may take more time.

Topic 4: Certificates

Stacey: We have seen a huge want and need for electronic certificate transmission.

Tom: The USPS has enough problems as it is, and I think this would be huge for the BMV to have access to these certificates by using the student's permit number. Maybe in the interim we should be able to go ahead and email. It is already an electronic document. As soon as we hit print a PDF comes up. It would be so much easier.

Mark: I am completely on board with this option. The problem we see a lot of the time is that kids are scheduling their test before a certificate is even generated. I think that there should be a specific number in DETS that is transferred over to the BMV as soon as we generate it, or let the testing stations have access to the system to see. It is just simple customer service.

Ruth: I want that student and parent to come in a pick up their certificate. I think it is the last chance for us to talk to them. We don't just give them certificates, we also give them a safety packet. I think if we added a certificate number box to when they go online to schedule their test then it would solve that problem. I think more regulation in when you can schedule the test and when that certificate is needed would be better.

Mike: The scheduling of the test could be a whole call in itself. We even have kids call and tell us they have tests scheduled and they aren't even signed up for drives. I think if we change the rules then we need to leave the option in for schools to mail. It should be up to the schools.

Topic 5: Online

Stacey: As you know, the online schools are in law. I know it is a big concern.

Jeff: We were involved in the online meeting where the online people came in and said that we will destroy the brick and mortar. I am not a big online person. In fact, we are no longer doing any behind the wheel for online people. If in fact so many people don't like it, and they find that it is not meeting what our needs are, then we should just all quit doing behind the wheel for them.

Mike: I have an online program, I totally get the side that I am hearing, but I just want to say that our online follows the same curriculum most of you use. I can say our course requires the student to be constantly engaging in the course, and we even have kids complaining because the course is taking so long. We do understand your frustrations and I do support what Jeff just said, and think that the rule doesn't say you have to train those students if you don't want to.

Randy: I like Mike's concept where they make you click on everything, or remind them constantly to be active. I like the online because it helps kids who learn in different ways, it also accommodates kids with different schedules. I think it at least encourages kids who were thinking about waiting until they are 18 to just test for their license to give driver training a try first.

Mark: Mike that is the most positive I have heard anyone speak about an online program. Is that your online or just the AAA online?

Mike: I do run the online program for the state of Ohio, and I can say that it took us a long time to get where we are. We have only been up and running for about nine months now. I will say that we do have complaints because kids get locked out, or kids go over time. I can only see so much of what the student sees, but I would encourage anyone to actually take the program and give me feedback.

Mark: The reason I ask is because we had someone approach us about the AAA online program.

Mike: I will give everyone my contact information in the comments.

Ruth: I was there with Jeff in the meeting for online. I vehemently opposed online driver training. We have also suspended taking anymore online students for driving because we simply don't have the time. We have so many calls because they want done immediately and we simply cannot handle that. They also come to us and act as if they are entitled to drive times because they took online. We have to explain that it is a first come first serve basis and they are paying the same amount as others. I think in car we have to teach a lot on the fly because they are just clicking through and aren't learning as much when they take online.

Tom: If someone is a new provider and submits a new program what is the wait time?

Stacey: Six weeks for the curriculum review.

Lisa: We just recommend the AAA course, and we also give parents a timeline. We have a lot of students who call and hound you about getting their drives done. I have even had students tell me that they did not do any of their online course. If I get those students who should not be behind the wheel then I will space out their drives to make sure they know what they're doing. We also give all of the students a sheet to go over in the parking lot to make sure that the student and instructor are on the same page before leaving the parking lot. I also make sure to tell them upfront what the timeline looks like and that I will space them out if needed. I also make sure they know that I have a full six months to complete them.

Mike: I think this is a topic that ties into virtual classroom. I think it gives the student another option besides brick and mortar or online. I think it still gives those parents who want that live instructor a great option.