

July 20, 2020 Public Comment sent prior to and during the meeting.

Please note: all comments, links and attachments referenced have been forwarded to the Board of School Directors and Superintendent Copeland for their review.

My name is Barbara Schick. I have lived at 221 Welsh Terrace in Merion since 1971. My children went through the LM Schools in the 1970s-80s.

I understand that parents are eager to get their children back to school and that many children want to go back this Fall. But I believe that health considerations dictate that it is too soon for this to happen. The County has not met the original CDC guidelines for continuous decrease in cases; rather, throughout the state, the incidence appears to be rising again. The ability of children to transmit and suffer from Covid-19 is far from clear, but we are hearing every day of new cases affecting (including deaths) infants, children, and young adults. We have seen the tragic consequences of too-early opening of some businesses in a number of states, notably CA, TX and AZ but now including the entire South. The PA teachers' unions have asked for remote learning to continue in the Fall, as they are very fearful of the health consequences for themselves in coming back to the schools in person, and rightfully so. A number of states have refused to open schools for the Fall term. In yesterday's NY Times there was a very compelling article about the concerns of janitorial personnel in coming into a situation where they are not really trained in infection control and not told of exactly where an infected person has been within the space they are assigned to clean and they were not given adequate PPE; while this article addressed mostly workplaces, I see the same concerns in the schools.

Each child and adult who enters a school has contact with numerous family and other household and other community members. One sick child or adult in the situation can cause an acceleration of disease throughout the community. While ideally families will let you know if their child has been exposed, in real life this may not happen as parents are eager to get to work and have their children supervised in school. Remember, this is a disease that affects all ages, has no cure or prevention, and spreads in ways we have not begun to understand. We cannot gamble with the lives of our children and the adults in the schools and in our community.

I have read completely the Guidances put out by Dr. Levine and Dr. Rivera for the State and for Montco by Val Arkoosh, and find them both grossly inadequate. **I have written detailed letters to all three and would be happy to share them with any school board director who asks me for them.** I have read much of the information on the LMSD website including the 41-page document put out by the LMSD and while on the surface the document looks good, it is full of conditionals like "when time permits" or "when possible." This does not give me confidence that the guidelines are attainable. They discuss the ability of the schools to keep the air clean using the HVAC system adjustments and filtration systems; are all the LM schools equipped with up-to-date systems that can really do this? How do you know that the virus is actually being removed? Is this true also of schools throughout the County? Masking suggestions and 6' separation might be safe in situations like going to the supermarket or Walmart, where you stay for a short time in a large space, but do not translate to safety in a room full of people potentially breathing virus into stale air in closed rooms. This is only the beginning of a very long list of questions and comments.

To this I would add that the plan for 6' separation probably cannot work unless a large number of the students are kept home by their parents. Thus many children will have to wear masks all day, and that will cause other problems. What do you do about kids whose parents refuse to let

them wear masks? When would the parents have to notify you so you have a realistic amount of time to plan? And I wonder who would be teaching the remote classes during the time that many kids would be in school, given the two days a week in person and 2 days remote for each child that you have proposed. You cannot double the faculty, so this may be totally unworkable.

The decision about whether to open the schools is a big responsibility. I hope you do the right thing, which at this point in my opinion is to observe strictly the original CDC guidelines and listen to the teachers' unions that are quite firm in not wanting to return to in-person teaching under the current conditions. All parents need to know the contents of the guidelines that have been proposed, and where they fall short and where they might succeed in creating the environment we want. This has to be an honest and open process.

*Barbara Schick (retired Professor of Medicine and Biochemistry)
Merion Station PA 19066*

Dear School Board Members and Superintendent Copeland,

Please do not approve the plan outlined in the Health & Safety Plan because it cannot to meet all the safety recommendations set up by the State if the school population does not fall to 50%. We do not know the long-term effects of Covid on children and the harm to the health of the teachers and family members who will be exposed. We need to take a proactive approach to prevention by following the guidelines that have been provided by the state. A hybrid schedule with schools at 50% capacity will allow for the all the state guidelines to be followed and give all students an equitable experience. The current plan gives parents a choice of sending children into a situation where health guidelines cannot be followed or a virtual option that is not administered by the School District.

In reviewing the Health & Safety Plan, there are three State recommendations that the District cannot follow at full capacity. The inability to maintain social distancing guidelines on the buses should be seen as a red flag because students will be traveling together and then splitting into separate classes. The inability to maintain the recommended 6 feet of distance in throughout the schools and the inability to assign seating to each student when we are at full capacity are clear indications that this plan is not feasible. The health of our students and their families should be the top priority guiding our decisions at this time.

The option provided to parents who do not want to send their children into a situation where state guidelines cannot be met is inequitable. The virtual academy will be outsourced to the MCIU by way of the MVP and it is not run by the School District. The instruction is mostly asynchronous while students who take the health risks in the current plan will receive in-person instruction. How is this equitable education? Parents should not have to sacrifice safety for education when there is a less risky solution. We should enter the year in a hybrid plan where all safety recommendations can be met for both the safety of students and staff.

Thank you,

Catherine Mathews
Wynnewood, PA 19096

We are new parents to the District and wish to comment on the current reopening plans for the coming fall semester.

We appreciate the stress you are all under in contemplating and evaluating different options for our kids' educations this fall. This is not an easy task and there is no template for it.

We appreciate that you are taking guidance from state authorities and public health officials. Listening to scientists and physicians is the best we can do with the plethora of unknowns.

But please do not defer to state authorities in terms of protecting the safety of our children, teachers, and staff. Just because we are in the "green" zone does not mean that it is business as usual. All of us know that. All of YOU know that. That alone is not enough to determine whether it's safe to send our kids back to school. The point here is, don't pass the buck. Make your own determination with the help of local experts. We are a District rich in scientific expertise. If we have not already, please constitute a committee of medical and scientific experts as well as public health officials to determine and analyze the risks to reopening. If there are specific guidelines or constraints that we must follow as families, please articulate them clearly and be sure to have an enforcement mechanism in place.

Relatedly, even if you determine that it is safe for our children to return to school in early September, you must realize that we might be forced to change course at any time. Please think through that disruption and transition in terms of our kids' psyches, educations, as well as the hardship on parents in terms of child care and logistics. We must have alternative plans for what is a probabilistic occurrence. Those plans should not disadvantage families that choose to send their kids to school versus those that opted into the Virtual Academy. How will students who start live be integrated into virtual learning that has been ongoing since the beginning of the school year? Will the curriculums match? Will live teachers be forced to react to a closing as they did in the Spring versus planning for virtual teaching? You hopefully are considering all of these questions. Please let the community know what your responses are.

Thank you.

Praveen Kosuri and Sarah Paoletti
Parents of a Penn Valley student

As a parent of three children in the district, I just wanted to quickly voice my enthusiastic support for the current reopening plan. I am grateful that the district is giving families two options: (i) to attend school at a frequency that's based on the county's reopening color; and (ii) all-cyber option. Providing the cyber option will ensure that any family that is uncomfortable with in-person learning will be entitled to opt for quality distance learning. Likewise, it satisfies those parents, like me, whose children need in-person instruction. Of course I understand that in-person instruction will look quite different this year, but I think the current plan does as good a job as any balancing physical safety and emotional/academic development. No doubt you are hearing from many families who are vehemently in favor of an online

approach, and those who are vehemently in favor of reopening in-person. I like that the current plan allows families to choose between those two options. We are extremely grateful to have the choice.

Best,
Jennifer Fried

I find it very concerning that LMSD is pushing ahead with a plan for a full reopening of school in September despite your own acknowledgement that you cannot reopen the schools safely. The district should be looking at options that will keep all children and teachers safe and avoid unnecessary illness and death. If you fail to do that you are failing everyone who relies on your board.

Sent from my iphone
Kelly J. Fox, Esquire

I am writing to voice my opposition to the schools current proposed reopening plan for the 2020/2021 school year. I feel that the district's options — forcing parents to choose between the health and safety of their children at the expense of the quality of their education by either forcing students to come back to school at 100% capacity, 100% of the time versus not coming back to school and having to engage in county-provided education — is untenable at best. At worst, the proposed plan is hazardous to both the education and well-being of the district's school children. Not to mention it put the health of our community's educators at risk.

How a school district with the resources of ours can possibly think that an all or nothing approach is acceptable is asinine. As a parent of a middle schooler at WVMS, I vehemently oppose this plan.

Jessica Troiano

My daughter is entering first grade at Cynwyd this upcoming school year. It will be our first year in the district. We are very eager and excited for her - as is she.

We hope that LMSD opens and has school in-person. We trust that safety protocols will be in place including masks, hand washing, and hand sanitizer. It is critical for my daughter's - as well as other young children - to have school in-person in order to properly learn, grow, foster education, and friendships.

Thank you.
Stacy Greenberg

After reviewing the Health & Safety Plan regarding school reopening, I disagree with the plan to return children to school if social distancing is not possible in all classrooms and during lunchtime. If this is not possible, the board should recommend the plan option that is outlined with a Yellow phase where only a portion of the children attend each school for 2 days in person. The health and well-being of our teachers and students is more important than full time in person education.

Sincerely,
Krista Hamilton
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Although our county is currently considered to be in the "green" phase, COVID cases remain significant, and it seems negligent and irresponsible to reopen at 100% when our schools do not have space for social distancing requirements.

At the very least, consideration should be made for moving PE and athletic programs entirely out of doors, as well as lunch, and some classes as well. For high school students, a blended reopening would allow for more students to drive themselves to school, reducing crowding on buses. Current evidence suggests that while students under 10 are less likely to contract and spread COVID, older teens can transmit it easily and often have few symptoms themselves, making temperature and symptom screening less sensitive.

I urge the board to consider the health of students and their families, as well as the teachers, in this decision. Opening school too broadly is likely to speed disease spread until a vaccine is available and drive us back into the red phase, eliminating in-person instruction entirely.

Sincerely concerned,
Elizabeth Paniagua MD

I am writing as a parent of incoming second graders at Penn Wynne elementary school. I am writing to ask that the school board reject the health and safety plan that has been proposed by Lower Merion. This plan is a disgrace. It fails to adhere to the recently announced state guidelines of limiting class size and keeping students a full six feet apart. Lower Merion's plan to bring students to school five days a week is absolutely shameful and unsafe. It puts out families at risk for the sake of those who simply view school as free childcare. Lower Merion has failed to solicit parent input like neighboring school districts. If they had, they would find that Lower Merion parents are not comfortable sending their children to school five days a week and would prefer a safer hybrid model like neighboring Haverford and Philadelphia and Central Bucks school districts, or would prefer a fully virtual synchronous model run by the school district. The district's plan to outsource all families who are uncomfortable with five days of in-person school to a virtual program run by the MCIU (Montgomery County Intermediate Unit) is downright disgraceful. Lower Merion should be taking its responsibility seriously to educate all students and not just the half of the district (or less) who are willing to take extreme risks to their safety. Rather, Lower Merion must reject this health and safety plan and adhere to the guidelines set forth by Governor Tom Wolf earlier this week. Further, LMSD must immediately send out a survey to parents about whether we would prefer a virtual or hybrid model. You must adopt one of those models run by the school district and NOT the MCIU. This is especially true for children with special needs and IEPs. I cannot outsource my kids' education to the MCIU, nor can I take risks with 5 days a week of crowded in-person school. You must reject this proposed health and safety plan. I expect better from LMSD.

Regards,
Sasha Coffiner

I am writing to urge the board to push for opening LMSD schools with the hybrid model currently proposed only for the yellow phase in order to best minimize our children's exposure and maximize the ability for them to socially distance. Anything else is irresponsible and below any district who claims to use data to drive their decisions. Many of our neighboring districts in South Jersey and even Philly proper have already made this call and we do not want to be the district who forces our children into unsafe conditions when it is not entirely necessary. Please stop this push for 5-day school this school year.

Sincerely,
Katie E. Feinman
Penn Valley, PA
Mom to an incoming 2nd grader at Belmont Hills

We are writing to go on record in opposition to the option of having all students attend school in person simultaneously WITHOUT the ability to maintain a 6ft social distance.

We support 50% attendance even during the green phase until a vaccine is available to the public.

We have the safety of our children and the faculty/staff as our priority.

Jessica & Jon McNeary
Wynnewood PA 19096

Dear LMSD board,

I have no doubt the decision before you is a difficult one to make, but I ask that you please make the yellow plan of going to school 2 days and virtual for 3 days the plan while in Green also. It is so important that students social distance while in Green and our classrooms are far too crowded to space the children the way they need if we have 100% of the students in class. Doing a schedule that brings capacity down allows students the benefits of learning safely, and does not force them into complete isolation by signing them up for asynchronous instruction through the Virtual Academy. I beg you please to reconsider your plan.

If the plan remains to stay with the 5 days of 100% capacity, I then ask why the school board did not take the time over the summer to order plexi glass partitions to separate the students so that some measure of mitigating spread of the virus is achievable. More must be done to keep the children and teachers safe.

Thank you,
Shannon Moyer
Gladwyne Elem. parent

I am dismayed by the apparent lack of transparency regarding the current proposed Health Plan on the 7/20/20 agenda. Other neighboring districts have provided many opportunities for parents to give feedback on plans to reopen schools safely - this includes Radnor and Philadelphia School Districts. We have only been provided with a few "we're working on things" emails from Dr Copeland and those emails did not disclose this email address - I had to literally dig for it in your agenda - or the fact that this plan was being voted on this evening.

Had you commissioned these surveys here in Lower Merion, you would learn that MANY PARENTS, including myself, are NOT in favor of bringing 100% of the kids back into the schools full time if 6ft of social distancing cannot be maintained in classes, busses and while eating lunch. The fact that the Board concedes that the recommended social distance requirements cannot be maintained at 100% attendance means that our children are being endangered EVERY DAY and the parents are being endangered EVERY DAY and teachers are being endangered EVERY DAY. Why would you recommend this when other districts are enacting hybrid models even in the "green" phase?? Why do you believe full time/full capacity attendance is acceptable for our children when it is not even safe enough for the Board to meet in person??

As you cast your vote this evening from the relative safety and protection of your home, I urge and implore you to vote NO on this plan so you can obtain valuable input from parents on this crucial public health issue.

Thank you,
Blair Adler (parent of BCMS and LMHS students)

I have three sons in the district that will be in 6th grade 8th grade and 10th grade respectively in the fall. My younger two kids are afraid of going to school full time - Welsh Valley - and my older one is very wary given the hallway crowding at Harriton he experienced last year as a freshman.

We would definitely prefer the hybrid option two days at school three days at home as that seems to allow for a much safer school environment attending with just half the student body as opposed to going five days per week with everyone, and for a better learning experience with live instruction to supplement the remainder of the time learning remotely.

My ex husband and I both work full time - I will be working from home except when required to be in Court - which is Bucks county only at the moment - as all other surrounding county courts including Montgomery County remain closed for civil jury trials likely until 2021.

Kindly consider my comments in your vote.

Best
Katie Frechette

My name is Joy English and I reside in Wynnewood. I have a daughter who will be in 7th grade this year at Bala Cynwyd Middle School.

I read the Health & Safety Plan and am concerned that LMSD plans to open at full attendance in the green phase but admits on page 11 of the plan that it will only be allowed to achieve the recommended social distancing guidelines if the schools are at 50% capacity. If that is the case, should each school contact the parents to 1) ask for volunteers to sign up for the virtual academy? and then 2) to tell parents up front that school will begin with a hybrid of onsite & virtual learning in order to follow the guidance on reopening from Montgomery County and from the DOH.

The plan also states that LMSD cannot assign seats to students in Middle School unless it is at 50% capacity. Assigned seating is in the guidance from Montgomery County.

With these statements, please confirm how LMSD plans to reopen in the green phase in September? I would hope that they will not put the students, teachers and staff at risk and that they will follow the guidelines by PA DOH. If they follow the guidelines, it sounds like LMSD will need to open at a reduced onsite capacity of 50%. When will they communicate that to parents?

And will they ask the parents for feedback as they work out the details on the opening?

I am a parent of 2 Penn Wynne elementary school students. I want to share my comments about the students attending school in September. The Health and Safety Plan states that the schools can't maintain social distancing with all students attending but they can with 50%. I want my children to get the education they need but I also want us to survive this pandemic. While remote learning in the spring was barely helpful, at least we were healthy. The proposed plan to split the students in half so they can attend different days is the safest way to provide some in person instruction. Also having live zoom instruction is another way to get direct instruction without being in the same room. Please consider a more conservative start to the school year than every student attends every day.

Thank you, Rebecca Spiegel

I am a parent of an LMSD elementary and middle school student. I am very unhappy with both the information that has been released regarding the Fall as well as the lack of information. Students and teacher safety needs to be the number one priority and the “plan” released thus far is just not appropriate at all. See recent study: (Link shared with the Board)

I am also dismayed as to why parents have not been given an option to share our opinions. Other neighboring school districts have sent out surveys to parents. At this time, I do not feel that it is safe for our children to return to brick and mortar buildings, nor do I think the plan LMSD has (thus far) is going to keep kid/teachers safe.

Sincerely,
Dolan Kneafsey

I would like to start this email by stating that I am personally a LMHS graduate, I have a son who is an LMHS graduate, and 3 other children in the LMSD system including an incoming senior and sophomore at LMHS and in incoming 7th grader at BCMS.

Additionally, I perform Covid testing (PCR testing) at my Urgent Care Center in Montgomery County through a certified laboratory, and I am also the physician for a large school district in Montgomery County. I have been involved in their emergency planning meetings and am currently working with the school's health department to look into COVID planning. So I have both personal and professional stakes in this discussion.

I am writing to express my EXTREME concern regarding the proposed plan to open schools at 100% while cases of Covid-19 are still rising.

Your proposed plan to re-open states that you will be following the guidelines. However, it contradicts itself on multiple occasions by admitting that following these guidelines will not be possible if the schools are at 100%. Additionally, although still in the green phase, the most recent regulations by Governor Wolf preview that more stringent restrictions are forthcoming simply because of people's lack of adherence to the guidelines. This fact is straightforward, and shows that given the opportunity, people will not adhere to the guidelines, and will place themselves and anyone they come into contact with at risk of the disease.

There are so many questions that cannot be answered such as: Are you planning to quarantine everyone for 14 days prior to allowing them to come back into school before school starts? How are you going to verify that people have not travelled? Can you rely on temperature checks knowing that there is a large number of asymptomatic carriers of COVID? Along with many others. You are using false assumptions that people will be honest, and that they all feel as strongly as they should that this disease is as dangerous as it is.

You are also putting the responsibility on all parents to follow the rules and check their children daily before coming to school. It is completely naive and irresponsible to think that all parents will do this. The news is filled with people who refuse to even believe that this virus exists and refuse to wear masks and are literally shooting and killing people for demanding they do so. What is the plan for a parent who puts their child on a bus and refuses to make them wear a mask? The bus driver is to enforce that rule and then potentially get shot? I simply cannot trust that every other parent of every student is going to follow your rules and for you to trust that is ludicrous.

By way of data for my concern, I am testing 30-50 people a day in my Urgent Care. In June my percent positivity was 5.69%. To date in July we have tested four times the number of patients we tested during all of June and my percent positivity is 7.18%. This is just one center doing a small amount of tests. But this cohort shows a dramatic increase in cases and percent positivity over the last month. To bring students back is only going to force a large swing in cases and by that time it will be too late.

Data: JUNE 1-30: N=123, Positive= 7, PERCENT POSITIVE = 5.69%

JULY 1-18: N= 404, Positive= 29, PERCENT POSITIVE = 7.18%

As for the virtual classroom, this is simply not the same as In person learning, either socially or academically. To give parents the “option” is a cop-out and an excuse. I have the option of either sending my kids to school and putting them in direct harm’s way or keeping them home and giving them a potentially sub-standard educational experience in comparison to their friends whose parents may be less risk averse to COVID. This is simply not a fair choice.

It also flies in the face of your logic that your meetings are over Zoom. You are respectful enough of the virus to not hold in person meetings yet are going to cohort thousands of children at school every day. This simply does not make sense.

I obviously want the best for my children. I want the best education in the safest possible environment. Your plan to re-open simply does not put students’ safety first, and the alternatives are simply not equivalent. You are asking parents to make the choice between safety and education. This is not appropriate and not responsible. A better plan would be to make sure the virtual education is up to par and require attendance at those sessions and allow the virus to hopefully settle down until either further process can be made or the numbers go down and stay down.

I am more than willing to discuss my feelings at your meeting and to present my data as well in more detail if that would be helpful. However, I ask that you simply ask yourselves if you are 100% comfortable sending your children to school. If so, I would ask you for scientific data to support that there is no increased risk of having a full student body in one place at the same time, and if not, how can you possibly expect me to do that to my children?

Requiring attendance at school in person in order to get the education that Lower Merion has always provided simply puts my children, my family, our community, and the general population in direct harm’s way and places the Board at the center of the responsibility for any negative outcomes that occur from that decision.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

ERIK SOIFERMAN, DO, MBA, FACOI, FACP

I am a longtime resident of Lower Merion Township, and while I no longer have children in school here, I continue to live here, and to pay real estate taxes to support public education. So—I am a stakeholder in the decisions you are making about reopening schools. I am also a physician.

I am very concerned about the plan to bring all students back for in-person learning. As your plan acknowledges, it will be very difficult to maintain the social distancing that is

vital to reducing spread of COVID-19. We have mounting evidence from other nations—most recently, a large study from South Korea—that show us that re-opening schools is associated with increased spread of the virus. Some of those who will become infected through a family member who contracted the virus while at school will be from vulnerable populations and may become very ill. Some may die.

Some countries have been able to safely re-open, but this has ONLY been after a sufficiently long period of sufficiently enforced stay-at-home policies to get the virus to very low levels. This Spring, eastern Pennsylvania was at risk for hospital collapse because of too many patients, not enough beds. We got through that—but we could be right back there again with rapid spread.

The School Board MUST take into account that the decisions you make will not only affect students and staff at the schools, but will impact the entire community. A more cautious return to in-person instruction, perhaps at the yellow phase description, would be better for the community as a whole, and I believe it will ultimately get us to a new (and perhaps better) normal faster.

Sincerely,
Lorna Lynn, M.D.
Wynnewood, PA

I would like to voice my opinion that sending kids back to elementary school at 100% capacity when you have stated in your documents that social distancing cannot be maintained is irresponsible and not what I would expect of such an amazing school district during an uncontrolled pandemic. There have been several studies that show the hybrid model works better for virus mitigation while allowing for some social interaction. I think the board is being remiss if they think that some parents in the community wouldn't choose to send their children to school the hybrid option. It doesn't have to be an all or nothing (virtual only) approach. Personally the majority of people I know in Lower Merion have at least one parent who doesn't work or works part time and could swing this schedule for the health and safety of their children. I also want to point out that in the Downingtown Area School District, similar socioeconomically to ours, when polled 80% of parents said they could accommodate a hybrid schedule if that was offered.

I would urge the board to at least give parents the option of hybrid.

Thank you
Kate Trombello

I am a parent of a soon to be 9th grader. I am concerned that the plan allows students to take off their masks in the classroom when seated at their desk. I believe that is ok during lunch time to eat, but not during any other time. When you have people in a room together masks should be worn all the time unless eating or drinking to ensure everyone's safety. I also believe there should be daily temperature checks for students and staff prior to entering the building and entering a bus for all persons. This would help to identify possible cases of COVID prior to entering the school building. Plexiglass should also be utilized to partition desks, staff, and students. Any sanitation should be with WHO approved materials that are proven to prevent COVID spread. More custodial staff is needed to ensure cleaning is in full compliance and not just cursory and time saving. Outside climate controlled trailers should be rented to maximize teaching space during the colder seasons.

Sincerely,

Sharon Buchholz

From Sherry Tillman

I am requesting that you delay the in-person reopening of schools until PA has 14 days of a positivity rate of below 5%. The current measures presented by LMSD will not ensure the safety of our students, teachers, and the greater LMSD community. It is simply not possible to implement a 100% in-person reopening this fall while maintaining social distancing.

Furthermore, the current LMSD plan of reopening schools fully while offering a “virtual academy” disproportionately targets less affluent students whose families will not have the resources to allow their child to stay home and attend virtually. While LMSD is providing the virtual academy alternative, this is not an option for many families that will then need to decide between putting food on the table and keeping their family safe. The only way to ensure equity of access to virtual schooling and thus safety is to provide it universally.

By beginning the school year virtually, or at most on a hybrid schedule, LMSD can better ensure proper social distancing measures and equal access to safe public education for all students.

The COVID-19 crisis continues. Once students and staff fall ill, bring the virus home to family members, and the inevitable deaths ensue, our LMSD community will be further devastated. Please reconsider the current plan for a 100% in-person reopening of schools this fall.

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By beginning the school year virtually, or at most on a hybrid schedule, LMSD can better ensure proper social distancing measures and equal access to safe public education for all students.

The COVID-19 crisis continues. Once students and staff fall ill, bring the virus home to family members, and the inevitable deaths ensue, our LMSD community will be further devastated. Please reconsider the current plan for a 100% in-person reopening of schools this fall.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Carolann Gosweiler

A concerned parent of two LMSD students

The proposed agenda indicates that if 50% of students or fewer return for in person than the district can meet PDE and CDC guidelines for reopening. The agenda does not include enrollment numbers for LMVA, so it is unclear if schools will be able to reopen.

The agenda lists information, but is not clear on criteria for action. It leaves how to act up to inference, which is not in the best interests for effective communication, civic participation, and for families and staff to prepare. The alignment to phases with actions is undercut by admissions that even within green or yellow attendance pressures do not allow the PDE guidelines under each phase to be met.

So if less than 50% of students are enrolled in LMVA, which I believe would be the case (or is a knowable piece of data), then it is unsafe to open school. It seems that we already know that full re-opening cannot safely occur.

I urge the board to move this conversation forward as fast as possible so everyone can prepare and to not spend board time as well as delay decisions if we know full reopening is not possible.

Other smaller and larger districts have already effectively led and communicated about the fall plans and I trust that Lower Merion will come to a decision quickly.

Thank you for hard work and time!

Darren Burris
(Father of 3 LMSD students)

Thank you for all of your thought and effort going into the Health and Safety document for reopening. After reading the entire document, I do not feel that it is possible to have students and staff to return to school in person, even in green. Here are the reasons why:

1. 6ft of distance cannot be maintained at your current plan of 100% capacity and would be extremely difficult to maintain at the 50% capacity. Furthermore, this will be a nightmare to enforce at the elementary levels even if it is possible.
2. There is too much reliance on self evaluation and self reporting of symptoms by parents and staff. Even in the best of times parents send sick kids to school and I don't see how we can expect things to change especially given parents need to return to work and the political climate surrounding the pandemic. The difference being the consequences are now decidedly more deadly.
3. The current plan for air filtration and classroom air quality is not adequate for 100% capacity.
4. It is now too late to provide adequate hand washing facilities for this fall. As I've been imploring my school principal and the district for the past 3 years, these facilities should still be pursued for future use.

I realize the virtual academy has been established to accommodate parents such as myself. However, the MICU does not have a reputation for providing a quality education and it would be much more conducive to "normalcy" to have students' regular classroom teachers and peers participate in a virtual program together. I am also not only concerned for my student, but for my spouse as well. He is an educator in the district and I do not feel safe sending him back into school to interact with and be in close contact with a classroom full of students, given the current uptick in PA corona virus cases. There has been little to no communication with teachers over the summer, aside from the same emails parents received from Copeland. This is astounding.

Instituting all of these health and safety accommodations will still lead to a sub-standard and stressful educational experience for our students and staff. I realize a lot of parents want in-person to happen, and much of that is driven by the need for child care. School is to provide an education first and foremost. It is not in the business to provide childcare. Please consider putting more effort in to providing a quality online learning experience for our students, and allow childcare facilities, such as Right at School, to use school buildings to provide daytime care to those families who need it.

Regards,
Sabrina Keeler
PWES parent

Having read the LMSD Health and Safety Plan of 7/17/20, we have noticed that there is a contradiction between the need for establishing six feet of space between students and students, and between students and faculty/staff, and the admission that with the school district's aspiration to return at full capacity means that such distancing will not be possible.

Because the focus should be on public health and safety first, we would urge the district to reopen with its hybrid (two days face-to-face for half the students, one day virtual, and two days face-to-face for the other half of the students) model at most.

The trends in cases are not going in the right direction to assume that we will remain at green, and starting with full attendance will almost certainly hasten the community spread that would force a return to yellow anyway. To limit the ensuing disruption, and to better protect its constituents and employees, we think the school district should shift emphasis away from planning a full face-to-face return and towards focusing instead on planning and resourcing the best possible synchronous and asynchronous options for remote teaching and learning.

The current plan seems to be setting up a situation that is almost guaranteed to force schools to revert abruptly to ad hoc solutions for remote instruction. Why not get out in front of this situation before it develops? Professional development about online instruction would be very useful, and we do not see that represented in the plan.

We appreciate the herculean efforts of all involved, but we remain concerned that this plan is not sufficient to protect the health of our children, and thus our community.

Best wishes,

Valentina Joukhovitski, PhD

I support the proposed health and safety plan to allow in-person education starting in September. Our son is a rising senior at LMHS.

Thanks.

Brian McGuire
Bala Cynwyd

Please do not vote to bring back the entire LMSD student population at 100%. The new guidelines to open schools strongly suggest 6 feet of social distancing between individuals. This would be impossible if classrooms are filled at 100% capacity. LMSD has not consulted with the community and many of us are concerned that the district can not bring everyone back safely.

We desperately want our children back in school. This email is not sent in fear it is sent armed with information. Virtual learning has led to loss of academics and social stressors. but we are not willing to send them back if it is not safe. PLEASE consider a hybrid option for Lower Merion students. A hybrid option will keep the staff and students safer and will ultimately lead to more time IN school.

Many parents are considering PA cyber schools (including us for our 4 children) because they are unhappy with the LM MCIU Virtual Option and do not feel that returning to school full time is safe. We would certainly rather have our children connected to LMSD for schooling but we feel we will have no choice but to choose another option if students are expected to return full time.

It seems many surrounding districts are being creative, some are doing a hybrid option, some are only bringing back k-5 in person. Please consider other options. Our teachers and staff want to teach but it will be nearly impossible to teach and watch 23 plus kids to make sure they are social distancing. Please give them the platform to start with the cards in their favor. We understand the enormity of these choices and know how challenging it is to plan. We hope you decide to bring students back in a hybrid option.

Thank you,
Missy and Gabriel Levin
Penn Valley ES and Welsh Valley MS

Having read the LMSD Health and Safety Plan of 7/17/20, I have noticed that there is a contradiction between the need for establishing six feet of space between students and students, and between students and faculty/staff, and the admission that with the school district's aspiration to return at full capacity means that such distancing will not be possible. Because the focus should be on public health and safety first, we would urge the district to reopen with its hybrid (two days face-to-face for half the students, one day virtual, and two days face-to-face for the other half of the students) model at most. The trends in cases are not going in the right direction to assume that we will remain at green, and starting with full attendance will almost certainly hasten the community spread that would force a return to yellow anyway. To limit the ensuing disruption, and to better protect its constituents and employees, we think the school district should shift emphasis away from planning a full face-to-face return and towards focusing instead on planning and resourcing the best possible synchronous and asynchronous options for remote teaching and learning. The current plan seems to be setting up a situation that is almost guaranteed to force schools to revert abruptly to ad hoc solutions for remote instruction. Why not get out in front of this situation before it develops? Professional development about online instruction would be very useful, and we do not see that represented in the plan.

In addition, Lower Merion was the epicenter for Covid in this current wave in PA at Lower Merion HS. New research has come out saying that children under the age of 10 don't spread COVID as easily but those above the age of 10 spread it just as much as an adult. So if you're going to attempt to have full time with students how will that work? I 100% understand that we want our children back in the schools, but if you want there to be any type of safety for both the teachers and students you should at least attempt a hybrid method. We appreciate the herculean efforts of all involved, but we remain concerned that this plan is not sufficient to protect the health of our children, and thus our community.

Best,
Nakato Nsibirwa

From Debbie Tannebaum

Why are we not considering doing a Hybrid model while in the green phase?

Having read the LMSD Health and Safety Plan of 7/17/20, we have noticed that there is a contradiction between the need for establishing six feet of space between students and students, and between students and faculty/staff, and the admission that with the school district's aspiration to return at full capacity means that such distancing will not be possible. Because the focus should be on public health and safety first, we would urge the district to reopen with its hybrid (two days face-to-face for half the students, one day virtual, and two days face-to-face for the other half of the students) model at most. The trends in cases are not going in the right direction to assume that we will remain at green, and starting with full attendance will almost certainly hasten the community spread that would force a return to yellow anyway. To limit the ensuing disruption, and to better protect its constituents and employees, we think the school district should shift emphasis away from planning a full face-to-face return and towards focusing instead on planning and resourcing the best possible synchronous and asynchronous options for remote teaching and learning. The current plan seems to be setting up a situation that is almost guaranteed to force schools to revert abruptly to ad hoc solutions for remote instruction. Why not get out in front of this situation before it develops? Professional development about online instruction would be very useful, and we do not see that represented in the plan.

We appreciate the herculean efforts of all involved, but we remain concerned that this plan is not sufficient to protect the health of our children, and thus our community.

Best wishes,

Jason Mezey and Deirdre McMahan

Cynwyd Elementary, Bala Cynwyd Middle School, and Harriton High School Parents

> I am writing to comment about the plan to bring 100% of students back to in-person schooling full time without adequate social distancing measures. Such a plan would substantially increase the likelihood of students spreading infection at school, with the potential result of causing schools to be further closed down, and increasing the spread of the virus (both by those who do and those who don't show symptoms) to the community at large. That is unreasonable and unfair to the students, their families, and our entire community. Students should only return to school if it can be done in a way that is safe for all potentially affected parties.

>

> Amy Brownstein

> Ardmore, Lower Merion

I'm writing as a concerned parent of children entering 8th and 4th grades at BC and Cynwyd Elementary. I'm very upset that parents/guardians have not been given the opportunity to provide feedback in the form of a survey regarding district plans for reopening. The information provided thus far has not been very transparent causing undue anxiety for families and teachers. How does the district plan to safely open schools and follow the guidelines set forth by Montgomery County?

I'm also concerned about the MVP program as the virtual option. After our experience with the program this summer, I can say that it is awful at best. I would never consider enrolling my children in such a terribly engaging and poorly run program. I actually let my son drop Math 8 because of the utter lack of communication on the teachers end. He was unable to proceed because he needed things clarified

and the MVP teacher assigned to answer questions was non existent. When MVP reached out to me to discuss my concerns, the director had the nerve to accuse my son of never contacting the teacher even though I was sitting with him on every occasion that he sent correspondence. LMSD should be ashamed of themselves for offering such a lackluster program as an option for the fall.

Parents need to be able to have a voice in the decisions for the fall. Teachers need to feel safe and protected if they are being asked to return to classrooms. What is LMSD doing to address these issues?

Respectfully-

Lisa C. Maslow, M.Ed

Parent of BCMS grade 8 & Cynwyd grade 4

I am ABSOLUTELY AGAINST sending these kids back to school. You're having online Zoom meetings because it isn't safe but expect us to send our children? Are you kidding me???? This is irresponsible and I cannot believe that Lower Merion is even considering this. In my 20 years of living in LMSD, I have NEVER been more disappointed. What an absolute disgrace.

Nicole Mill

Mother of (entering 7th grade at BCMS) and mother of LMHS '18 graduate

I am concerned with the green phase in the health and safety plan. During the pandemic, it seems like the district should offer a plan that will adhere to state guidelines (6 feet guidelines). As a household with two working parents, 100% virtual is difficult. Children in schools 5 days/week not practicing social distancing, however, is also a concern. I would prefer that the district provide a hybrid model (similar to yellow phase option) for the green phase if the district can not adhere to state guidelines.

>

> Thanks.

> Kathryn Ciccarelli

> Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

As a parent with children in the LMSD, and relatives who are medical professionals, I am gravely concerned about the all kids full time plan for back to school. I believe it is unsafe for teachers, staff and children.

I prefer the cohort 2 days a week hybrid model that has been floated. I know the board cares deeply for children, families, teachers and staff and I trust that you will make a safe decision for all involved.

Thank you

Rachael Chou

I am a concerned PWES parent that just learned there is an important vote tomorrow night regarding air quality guidelines for the reopening of our schools.

Please include this email and my concerns in your comment section.

In order to maintain a safe social distance and keep air quality healthy, a 50% student capacity scenario must be an option that is thoroughly vetted with parent input.

I sent my concerns to the Reopening Task Force last week including citations to an MIT article detailing how coronavirus is spread through air droplets, and why mask wearing is not enough if social distance isn't maintained. Please read the email below.

I strongly believe we have a better chance to slow the spread of Covid 19 if we ease back into the school setting at 50% capacity.

Thank you for considering other options and including all parents concerns in your comments.

Sincerely,
Melanie Stewart

I'm writing you to ask you to reconsider the options you proposed for students in the fall. A full time going back to school in person does not seem to be at all reasonable under the current circumstances. We all want the kids to go back to school but unfortunately the infection rate we have makes this unrealistic. Please offer either the hybrid option or full time online. By full time we would much prefer the curriculum to be taught by the regular school teachers not by a third party.

Thank you
Petra Douglass mom of two lmsd students

Subject – Townhall Mtg from Adrian Selzter

I would like to give a suggestion to the school board and superintendent. Instead of spending your time responding with excuses to the students, you may be better served by acknowledging their experiences, instead of dismissing them. Find out what is behind their complaints. Instead of saying we have that plan in place, how about saying how did we miss you? How can we do better? Having your own agenda, no matter how well meaning, does no good if it is coupled with no community input and a our way or the highway attitude. Thank you for reading this.

Working for a school myself, I know how difficult it is right now to plan for the start of the school year. I know that you are getting a lot of new information daily and trying to update plans accordingly. All of the information that I've seen recently indicates the importance of keeping kids 6 feet apart in classrooms. Please consider, even if we are in the green phase, having classes split and alternate going to school two days a week so that social distancing can be kept in the classrooms.

Thank you for all you do,
Amy Fiske

I'm absolutely astonished at the way the district is handling this, such a lack of respect for all tax paying parents and the wonderful LMSD teachers, many of whom live in the district. There is a reason we send our children to these schools. But now it looks as though we may have to move on and look elsewhere for our child's education. A place where her safety and the safety of the staff is #1 and parent input is vital.

Are all the members willing to sit on the buses and in classrooms to truly see and feel the awesome responsibility you are asking our teachers and children to take on? Your responsibility is to provide a safe space for our children. It does not feel safe.

As parents of a 4th grader, we implore you to reconsider opening schools in September. You will be saving so many lives.

Sincerely,
Kathe and Sam Hall

Will it be possible for kids who want to “be” with their assigned class (instead of virtual academy) to do online 5 days a week with their teacher? In other words, if half the class is doing online half the week, can some kids do online the whole week?

Thank you!

Best,
Caralyn Spector (PVE mom, K and 4th)

I will not venture into territory to suggest how you navigate the bridge between full time, hybrid and online. It’s a complicated decision and a delicate balancing act and I applaud the dedication and effort going into the decision. However, it needs to be clearly defined and laid out imminently so plans can be life and life can be scheduled or modified based on LMSD plan.

Mainly, should hybrid occur (let’s be realistic, it’s inevitable), please map out how the structure for the virtual will look...specifically in younger grades where synchronous learning is necessary. How many hours per day? Timing? Teachers overseeing # of pupils on zoom? Access to recorded zooms? Specialities? Testing and state standards? Evaluations and grading? Things need to spelled out clearly with specific attention to grade level.

I look forward to a comprehensive plan for all phases that goes beyond the perimeter in scope and addresses the day to day operation of all models in all phases.

Thank you
Carrie Pestronk

I am a social worker and parent of PWES children- I believe that in the best interest of the student and teachers, the hybrid model would be the safest option. Having 1/2 the children daily would allow teachers more control over the students and cleanliness of their classrooms as well as give the children the social and emotional connections they need throughout the week.

I would prefer fewer weekdays for a longer length than 5 days back and a quick turn to homeschooling because one teacher in one building tested positive.

Please look at the whole picture when you vote.

Thank you,
Suzy gefen

I have Four kids at LMSD schools (two kids and Two step kids) I find it shocking that the school plans to open without social distancing (6ft and masks) which are described in state guidelines. This is not safe for Our kids or the district employees.If this is a way to push the lmsd virtual academy it will not push me to sign up as I find the asynchronous plan a horrid Idea for my kids. -Lauren Brodt-Hyett

Scientific data have borne out what infectious disease experts have long suspected, which is that young children present a much lower risk of transmitting COVID-19 than children 10 and older. (Link shared with the Board)

If children under 10 are permitted to learn in-person (while LMSD is in the green/yellow phase) and older children learn remotely, it will:

- Make it easier for schools to enforce physical distancing,
- Lower the risk of transmission within schools and the larger community, and
- Solve the problem of younger children having a harder time with remote learning environments.

There is precedent for this course of action, and many private schools are choosing to do it. You have the chance to do something innovative and effective here. Please, please take it.

Thank you.

Katie Calabrese

First, thank you for your work last year and now, leading during the huge challenge of figuring out how to continue educating during the pandemic. Our teachers did an incredible job of quickly implementing a virtual program for students last year. Thank you also for keeping us informed this summer with email updates.

I do not think we can attempt to return to school at 100% occupancy. It will be too stressful for our teachers, staff, students and families. There isn't enough room in our already crowded schools.

The nearby schools that I've heard of (Swarthmore-Wallingford School District, Philadelphia School District) are following a hybrid model in September. Are any other districts with similarly packed schools planning for 100% occupancy?

Teachers, at the very least, should be able to choose whether to teach virtually or in a classroom. Has LMSD asked teachers to find out how many teachers are at high risk, and how many teachers are comfortable going back into classrooms this year?

It will also be stressful to do a hybrid program, with the possibility of switching to 100% virtual during the school year. Instead, let's put our resources towards creating the best virtual program that we can, and opening school buildings to Right at School or something similar, to provide a space for kids to go where there are tutors and supervision.

Thank you for your time in reading this.

Jenni Marquiss

parent of 3rd and 1st graders

As the parent of four children in the Lower Merion School system, I genuinely believe that the risks of physically returning to school in the fall far outweigh the social and psychological issue that will arise from another year of remote learning.

Looking forward to a return to Cynwyd, Bala Cynwyd Middle and LMHS in September!

Thanks

Drenan McQuillan

I wanted to express my support for the reopening plan for 2020-2021. I appreciate the district's effort to reopen school. My children have adapted to wearing masks at camp this summer and will adjust accordingly in the school setting where needed. I work in healthcare and support the decision to reopen. Children need live education and the benefits of being in person with their teachers and peers. Thank you for thinking of the total needs of our students.

Best,

Rachael McQuillan

For those finding the situation tenable could there minds be appeased by possibly adding trailers or taking over empty office space for more classroom space?

I would also like to add for parents who object that they should strongly consider getting used to their children needing to wear masks in any setting outside of their home for the foreseeable future. Children are quite adaptable and we should have faith in their ability to do so.

Rachel McQuillan

We find in person schooling for the upcoming semester not feasible due to the increased likely hood that is directly correlated to in school education.

As parents of third and first graders we are find that with the current state of affairs it is unimaginable to place our kids in harms way by having them attend full time school in the fall.

We are also deeply disappointed that we are unable to have a say in the decision making process.

We are aware of alternative teaching options but believe that our children would stand to gain the greatest level of education and socialization within a virtual setting amongst the school community they know in Cynwyd Elementary.

Sincerely

Sara and Jeff Goldfine

Please reconsider sending our students back to school in the fall. There is nothing wrong with online teaching to save a life. Thank you for your consideration, Patti Leyden

We have 2 kids that are in WV & PV . We believe that it is NOT SAFE to bring kids into the buildings on a 100% schedule. We are the ones who don't want to choose the virtual learning program because of IEP, academic and social concerns. We need LMSD hybrid option right now as we worry for health and safety of our kids and our entire family.

Orit & Vasily Dolgushev

I can't imagine how difficult it is to address the task of opening schools this fall, however I'm writing to express concerns with the Health and Safety Plan as well as the Lower Merion Virtual Academy, as details on both have been released in the past week.

My family and I moved to Narberth in the fall of 2017 when employment brought us to Philadelphia from an amazing school district in the Harrisburg area. Despite only having half-day kindergarten, we believe strongly in public education and decided that LM schools would be best for our daughter. She attended private full-day kindergarten and is registered to attend Belmont Hills for first grade this fall. As with many families, we are strictly social distancing while doing our best to meet the educational and social needs of our child.

Having read the school district's safety plan and everything available on the LMVA, I feel that parents of elementary students are being asked to make an impossible choice. The risk of being unable to provide consistent distances of 6 feet with 100% capacity will be compounded by the difficulty 6 and 7 year-olds have wearing masks for long periods of time.

Alternatively, the LMVA is not geared to elementary students, and nothing I've read indicates that it will meet the quality of a Lower Merion school. I submitted a number of questions regarding the LMVA program. While it does limit exposure to COVID-19, I have a number of concerns with relying on a third party at such a formative point in education as first grade.

As districts across the Commonwealth are phasing opening and embracing blended learning, I urge the Lower Merion School Board to consider a more conservative course for opening the 2020-21 school year, using a hybrid blended learning approach that will support fewer students in schools and high-quality classroom and virtual education.

The current plan that will be considered by the board tomorrow seems to be set up to fail, and the disruption of moving to the hybrid plan, as cases continue to rise across the state and the nation, will be a likely conclusion.

Thank you for considering my concerns and for all you're doing to support the education of the children in our community. However, I remain concerned that the Health and Safety Plan as written is insufficient to support student learning or address health concerns. I know the clock is ticking but there must be a safer path forward.

Best,
Mandy Nace

As a parent of two children who attend Penn Valley Elementary school, I would like to address my support for the full reopening of the school with all the health measures required in that effect. It is important that my children are in class as remote learning was not as efficient as in class learning. As a working parent, I haven't been able to help my children to the fullest during the past three months remote learning. It is also highly discriminatory for children whose parents are working in site as they cannot get full academic help compared to their peers whose parents have more flexibility or do not need to work and can focus on their children's academic development. I urge you to consider these matters in making your decision. The economical and emotional impacts of online learning would be devastating for parents like me.

Sincerely,
Stéphanie Zenou

I am requesting that you delay the in-person reopening of schools until PA has 14 days of a positivity rate of below 5%. The current measures presented by LMSD will not ensure the safety of our students, teachers, and the greater LMSD community. It is simply not possible to implement a 100% in- person reopening this fall while maintaining social distancing.

Furthermore, the current LMSD plan of reopening schools fully while offering a "virtual academy" disproportionately targets less affluent students whose families will not have the resources to allow their child to stay home and attend virtually. While LMSD is providing the virtual academy alternative, this is not an option for many families that will then need to decide between putting food on the table

and keeping their family safe. The only way to ensure equity of access to virtual schooling and thus safety is to provide it universally.

By beginning the school year virtually, or at most on a hybrid schedule, LMSD can better ensure proper social distancing measures and equal access to safe public education for all students.

The COVID-19 crisis continues. Once students and staff fall ill, bring the virus home to family members, and the inevitable deaths ensue, our LMSD community will be further devastated. Please reconsider the current plan for a 100% in-person reopening of schools this fall.

Thank you. Sasha coffiner

Respectfully I am shocked to see that your plan for green is 100% full time school. There is no possible way to responsibly open and keep our kids and staff safely socially distant.

Fully reopening is a dangerous idea that is likely to result in a quick closure after someone gets sick.

Please consider a staggered schedule for opening.

In our current green phase you can't even have over 25 people gathered for a social event, how do you expect to safely bring thousands of students back to school?

In person learning is too valuable to jeopardize with a haphazard plan.

Please vote NO on your current proposal and go back to the drawing board.

Li Halpern

Mother of two LMSD students.

This recommendation is ill-advised, and reckless. Our leadership is now being questioned by a community and professional staff who were not surveyed and apparently, considered unworthy of offering insight and input.

Disappointed,

Dannielle Doran. 5th gr Merion

I am a parent of a rising 11th grader at LMHS and a rising 5th grader at PWES. I am also the parent of a recent alumni from LMHS.

I am fully in favor of my children returning to LMSD schools for in-person learning this September. However, I am concerned that full capacity 5 days/week runs the risk of greater contagion and a potential return to 100%. remote. As the district acknowledges on page 11 of the Health and Safety Plan, it is not possible for LMSD schools to socially distance at full capacity. However, at 50% capacity they can. I understand masks wearing will help mitigate the need to be 6 feet. However, I am concerned that during meal times students will be less than 6ft apart without masks. That is why I think the wiser plan is to start with a hybrid 2 day/week model at 50% capacity for each group of days. This will help with bussing as well.

The district could divide the students by geography and say for example, all of the kids from x neighborhood for PWES, BC and LMHS will come Monday, Tuesday and then kids from y neighborhoods will come to PWES, BCMS and LMHS on Thursday and Friday - that way siblings (even at different school levels) will come on the same days and it should help with bussing routes, etc.

While I would love for my kids to return 5 days/week, I want the district to choose the option that minimizes risk and increases the odds that we can remain in-person at school for as long as possible.

Lastly, I want to express my disappointment that the district's board meeting tomorrow night is a closed zoom meeting not allowing for members of the public to speak during the meeting. I know other districts that are making accommodations to allow for members of the public to speak during their virtual meetings, even changing their platform to youtube live to allow for more participation. This is an extremely important decision - one that should be made with public input.

Thank you
Victoria Dougherty

We would like to voice our concerns about the current plan to fully reopen LMSD schools in the Fall under the "green" scenario. This does not feel like a safe option for students or faculty at this time when the virus is not even close to contained and there is still so little known about its long-term effects. Despite all of the precautions we still fear that it will lead to a significant increase in the spread of COVID-19 in our community and many preventable illnesses and deaths. Furthermore, the potential shifts from green to yellow to red during the school year would be disruptive and stressful, undoing any benefits that were gained from the reopening and making the extra risk seem even less worthwhile.

We understand that the Virtual Academy is being offered as an alternative to attending in person, but this option does not seem like it's truly an LMSD program. Our son completed the last two months of Penn Wynne kindergarten virtually this year and that experience was wonderful. His teacher was so caring and engaged and she kept the classmates connected with each other through daily Zoom meetings. She had weekly one on one meetings too and responded with personal comments every time we submitted an assignment. We fear that Virtual Academy will be less personal, less social, and just not the Penn Wynne experience we have grown to love.

We understand these are very challenging circumstances and it's impossible to find a solution that will satisfy everyone. We just wanted to voice our opinion that we would be much more comfortable with a completely virtual LMSD program or the two-day per week hybrid model. We feel very uncomfortable with a full return to school but also feel reluctant about the Virtual Academy alternative.

Thanks so much for your consideration,

Angie Freestone

We are writing to express our disappointment in the health and safety plan proposed by the district and we hope the district will reconsider their position. Even though our county is designated as "green", new cases are continuing and it does not seem reasonable to be sending the kids to school when the district cannot guarantee that they will be able to institute proper social distancing. This plan admits that the district will not be able to ensure 6 feet of social distancing if there are more than 50% of the students attending at one time.

As far as the Lower Merion Virtual Academy which you have offered as a remote learning option, we are concerned about the quality of this largely asynchronous learning program. The MICU and the MVP program's recorded instruction is not up to the standards of the teaching that we have experienced in the district. So, we would not consider this to be a high quality remote learning option.

I would urge you to listen to the students, parents teachers, and staff to ensure the safest possible return for everyone or remote learning options that are engaging and quality alternatives.

Thanks,
Michele and Asif Chinwalla

As a parent of a child currently attending a Lower Merion School District school, I firmly believe schools should not be opening at full capacity anytime in the near future given the current state of COVID in Montgomery County, no matter what color coding the county may be currently assigned. It is not safe for students or staff. There is no way to maintain distances of six feet with the schools at full capacity, and even if it was I don't believe that would be sufficient protection for the hours spent in school. Nor is the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit Virtual Academy an adequate replacement for Lower Merion School District teachers for those parents who agree with me that school is unsafe to attend. Middle school and high school students should be being taught virtually by Lower Merion teachers as was done in the Spring, while younger students who would lack home supervision and students with special education needs that require live classrooms may be spread out among the various school buildings to maintain as much distance as possible with additional staffing as needed recruited from lower risk age groups.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
David Snyder

As both a parent of a rising junior at LM and a staff member at Belmont Hills Elementary School, I do not support the Health and Safety Plan as it stands. The plan readily acknowledges that LMSD cannot accommodate the social distancing guidelines recommended with 100% in person return to school.

I would urge you to consider using the yellow phase plan even if the state considers us to be in the green. It would be the responsible, practical, manageable, and safe option for staff, students, families, and the community.

Thank you,
Kate Galer

As a parent of two LMSD students, I am deeply concerned by the reopening guidelines and plan recently released by the district. I am sure that you are receiving a significant amount of input from parents, staff, and students so I will do my best to make my points below clear and concise.

1. I believe that the Governor's 'green phase' has created a false illusion of safety and return to the pre-pandemic normal. Unfortunately, experts are predicting a second and perhaps third wave of outbreaks this coming school year and we need to take PREVENTATIVE measures vs waiting for cases to spike in our region as they did in the spring.
2. Per the above, it is my opinion that planning to open the schools five days a week with the full enrollment of students is extremely risky to all of us. We need to proceed with caution.
3. Reopening the school at full enrollment 5 days per week is significantly higher risk to teachers and staff, not to mention students and their families. One of the primary reasons for this is the inability to properly social distance at full enrollment (this is noted in the REL research report).

4. We need to start with a hybrid option with multiple cohorts of students, each cohort attending school 2 days per week with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning on the other three days.
5. The virtual option that consists only of the MontCo Intermediate Unit virtual courses is subpar and I would not consider this to be a viable option for my children. The content I have seen from this program is the opposite of engaging.
6. I would prefer that resources are shifted to offer a hybrid model and a virtual program that is teacher led and a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. This recommendation is supported by the findings from the REL research (2020).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Celia Brown

I strongly feel it would be too risky to open at 100%. I feel the yellow phase option is a happy medium with still some risks, but the risks would be easier to manage. Over the weekend I had a thought about mask wearing and wondered if it would be possible for teachers and students to use some sort of microphone/headset combination to help amplify voices and assist with hearing at distances. This would allow students to be spread further away from each other and also reduce the need to remove masks to talk. Also, I feel outdoor classrooms should be used as much as possible if that is an option.

Best Regards,

Anastasia Frandsen

I write this email urging you to reconsider opening school at full capacity this September should we remain in green. In the reopening plan made public, the district acknowledges that they would be unable to maintain social distance at full capacity. This goes against virtually every guideline and regulation at the local, state, and national level.

As a two working parent household, the complexities of childcare are not lost on me. My family will struggle to figure out how to make school work virtually or in a hybrid model. We won't have the luxury of hiring tutors or teachers to supplement or oversee learning like many families in our district will do. However, now more than ever, we must make sacrifices for the greater good of our schools, community, and humankind. I am willing to put aside my own needs (childcare) to ensure that the students, teachers and staff are as safe as possible. I truly hope Lower Merion considers doing the same.

Please consider the hybrid model proposed in "yellow" for school reopening this fall. Given that you have already acknowledged you are unable provide a socially distant environment in the building at full capacity, this seems the only tenable option.

Thank you,

Samantha Rosenberg

Please consider reopening schools with the yellow phase guidelines, not green. Full reopening on a normal schedule would be irresponsible and potentially extremely dangerous.

Thank you for considering the safety of our children, faculty, staff and families.

Best regards

Deirdre Murphy

--

Good evening. I am deeply concerned about the “green” phase of the reopening plan for the school district. The inability to maintain social distancing is unacceptable at this point as we would be risking our children’s lives and the lives of staff members. Since we cannot find a way to maintain social distancing while all of the students are in school, we should be using the 50% capacity plan that is scheduled for the yellow phase during both green and yellow phases.

Please reconsider this plan.

Thank you,
Jessica Charmont
Ardmore, PA 19003

My name is Lisa Dribin, and I am a graduate of the class of 1988. I am a parent of a rising 1st grader who is entering the district this fall. I am sure you are awash with emails, and want to keep mine brief. Especially given the constantly evolving data, such as this from the NYT, in which a major study demonstrated that older children spread the coronavirus as much or more so than adults (Link shared with the Board) , I must strongly advocate for a 100% virtual return for middle and high school children. My child will be in elementary school. My concerns are different, in that younger children are much less likely to spread the virus, and also they are able to stay in one cohort for the full day, unlike high school and middle school, with rotating classes. I also want to beseech you to, as much as possible, identify and make virtual assignments available for at-risk teachers. As a teacher at another district in the county, I am appalled in general at the lack of efforts to protect teachers. We are a fully devoted bunch, but we should not have to put our lives on the line in this way. For the teachers in your district, you are responsible for their lives, and if they die or suffer debilitating impacts from COVID, if contracted at work, their death and illness is squarely in your hands, and will be with you for the rest of your days.

I also want to comment about the LMVA. I am so disappointed by this option, with few details yet presented as to the programming. Who will be teaching these programs? We pay to live in this district. Other districts are finding ways to use in-house teachers to provide virtual learning. What a great way to reassign teachers who are at risk. I hope you reconsider.

Finally, I want to note how disappointed I am in the literally complete lack of communication of any sort received by duly registered families of incoming new students. I appreciate that the district may not be able to deliver communications to incoming families using Power School until closer to the school year. However, that does not excuse the absolute failure of the district to provide any communication at all to incoming families via another means. Why were new families not added to a special email distribution list as each family completed registration, so that they could receive any and all communications? I spent hours calling the district and jumping through hoops trying to figure this out and had to resort to Facebook to try and figure out how to receive communications. It turns out we can sign ourselves up for them through a process that was kind of confusing. Why were new families not informed of this option? If for some reason it was impossible for an email distribution list to be created for new families as they registered, there was another easy solution. If the only way was for us to sign ourselves up rather than receiving automatically, then you actually have to let us know that. Simply include, in the email the district sends out to all families to confirm that their registration is complete, information on how to sign ourselves up to receive communications. Many, many families, most incoming families, have no idea that this option to sign up and receive information even exists. I am not sure who is in charge of this, but really it should be remedied as soon as possible.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns. I don't envy your position, but putting teacher and student lives at risk when we know there will be spread in school and some of our own teachers may die, the only way forward is clear.

Regards,
Lisa Dribin

Thank you for taking the time to develop such a thorough plan for reentry this fall. We are the parents of a rising 2nd and 4th grader at Gladwyne Elementary. We have yet to make a decision for the fall, and in our attempt to make an informed decision we reviewed the Health & Safety proposal. We were alarmed to read that the district is planning for a full reopening of the schools with the full knowledge that the guidelines for safely social distancing cannot be met unless attendance is at 50% or less.

If the projections being made by experts are correct, we are facing an even more challenging fall and winter, as COVID cases rise. Knowing this, we feel the district should be making every effort to proceed with a preventative mindset. Opening with a full, 5 day schedule, will put the teachers, staff and student population in positions of unnecessary risk. We believe a more cautious, hybrid model (as is described for the yellow phase) will allow for appropriate social distancing.

We appreciate the difficult task you have ahead of you as you plan for this school year. We ask that you put the safety of our teachers, staff and students, as well as the community at large first.

Jaime & Chris Thurber
Bryn Mawr

Thank you for your hard work on behalf of the LMSD during this unprecedented crisis. I am a parent of 2 children at Cynwyd Elementary School.

I am writing to express concerns I have after reading the July 13th Reopening update. I see from the specifics provided in the "LMSD Health and Safety Plan" that will be presented for approval at the Board Meeting tomorrow that there are more details with respect to social distancing and ventilation plans in the yellow and green phase, but I am concerned that these have not taken adequate measures or are not specific enough to provide a safe environment should students be returning to school physically.

I appreciate the plans to improve ventilation filtration systems ("subject to capacity limits"), and to distance children and "use a variety of spaces (auditorium, large classrooms, tents, outdoors, etc.) to ensure students can remove face coverings for lunch. Assigned seating for students in accordance with the Montgomery County Office of Public Health for classes and meals to extent possible." These are good goals, but the caveats about 'subject to capacity limits' and 'to the extent possible' are unsettling, and allow for inadequate safeguards if they are deemed to be too difficult. Furthermore, while filtration of the ventilation is discussed, I see no consideration about air turnover in enclosed spaces. If air is not circulating adequately, the degree of filtration does not matter. Are there considerations about how quickly the air in a space is turned over?

I work at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and for the past 3 and a half months I have witnessed the strict measures that have worked to contain the spread of the virus. I have also witnessed the cases where spread has continued: notably, exposure and transmissions from STAFF to other STAFF MEMBERS is on the rise, and continues to occur when strict measures are not followed. This most frequently occurs in the setting where staff are eating lunch together: smaller rooms, close quarters for longer periods of time and no face mask wearing.

Universal mask wearing when around ANY other people, and avoidance of sharing uncirculated air is becoming increasingly recognized as a needed measure to avoid transmission. These are understandably difficult metrics to achieve in many situations. Wishful thinking however, will not help to contain the spread of this virus. Trying to take shortcuts has been repeatedly demonstrated to result in worsening this crisis in the long run.

I am also concerned to see that Pennsylvania and Montgomery County remain in the green phase. Based on the initial criteria proposed by Governor Wolfe of <50 cases per 100,000 residents in the prior 14 days, Montgomery County should currently be in the Yellow phase (as of 7/18/2020 we are at about 62 cases/100,000 in the past 2 weeks). I understand that Wolfe and the PA DOH have determined that 'various other factors that are indicative of risk' are now coloring their decisions about re-opening, but unfortunately the trend of resurging cases across the US (and the gradually increasing case rate in PA, Philadelphia and Montgomery counties) are painfully demonstrating that cutting corners on reopening and compromising data-based decisions are unwise. I fear that sending children back to school without very strict isolation policies will result in an accelerated resurgence of virus spread which will quickly jump from our children to all members of the community.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and your efforts to provide safe and excellent education to our children in this uncertain time.

Sincerely,
Greg Supple

Subject Town Hall

Hello and thank you for sharing my comment. My name is Janis Lipsitz and I am a parent of 2 HS students in the district, one at Harriton and one at LM. I am also an outgoing member of the LMHS HSA (copying the current HSA Board).

During Thursday's town hall, there was a very articulate teacher in the district talking about the district culture and the need for change, including issues around status quo, fear and accountability. Many of the students' comments during the town hall reinforced some of these issues that are affected by culture. I'd like to comment on one, in particular. There were some examples raised of teachers who minimized or "laughed off" the importance of sensitivity training. I have been speaking with students who are in my children's circles who have validated this issue. This points to the need for accountability built into the culture within the district.

Organizational culture is defined as a system of shared values, beliefs and assumptions which govern how we **behave**. It is not easy to change behavior, and as a professional in the business of organizational culture, one thing I have learned the hard way is that training alone does not drive behavior change. The administration spoke of teachers attending sensitivity training with the assumption of behavior change as the goal. My comment is about considering other elements that ensure that the training is translated into behavior change on a day-to-day basis:

- What is the plan to measure the adoption of the targeted behaviors?
- how is the training and associated behavior reinforced?
- is there clarity on the standards/ expectations required of teachers?
- how do you hold teachers accountable for it?

This culture of accountability came up during the townhall relating to other issues besides sensitivity training, e.g. holding students accountable for racist or other behavior related issues. And in a broader

sense, what are the standards that our teachers are accountable for on a day-to-day basis? How are they measured? What does good look like? And how is that changing in the face of Covid? How is all of this assessed?

Finally, I would like to point out that when standards are clear, employees appreciate knowing “what good looks like” and feel like they know where they stand at any given time. When there are no standards, people are not sure if they are successful, which could be a factor in burnout/turnover.

I would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss these critical issues with relevant district stakeholders.

Thank you,
Janis Lipsitz
484-832-3816

Attached you will find a PDF outlining several concerns/comments with regards to the reopening, mostly regarding LMVA as the virtual option. I am submitting to the board public comments email address in advance of both the school board meeting as well as the LMVA zooms on Wednesday.

Respectfully,
Jennifer M. Solderitsch
Mother of Gladwyne rising 3rd grader and future Gladwyne student

****The attachment has been sent to the Board of School Directors for their review.**

Thank you for your hard work on behalf of LMSD families during this unprecedented crisis. I am the parent of two Cynwyd Elementary students.

I am writing to express my concern with the LMSD Health and Safety Plan under your consideration, specifically the “Green” scenario of 5 days/week with all students attending in person. This doesn’t seem remotely in keeping with the best practices of social distancing and risk mitigation at this time.

I think all LMSD students would benefit from being part of their school community during the 2020-21 school year. Missing out on personal interactions with our expert teachers, the structure of a classroom routine, and contact with peers were all shortcomings of remote learning last spring. I would strongly prefer my children to have some connection to Cynwyd this school year, but I feel the social distance and limited exposure offered by a 2 day/week, half capacity scenario is a more appropriate level of risk mitigation.

I believe appeasing vocal community members who are eager to have 5 days of school per week will force many families into the Virtual Academy even though they would prefer and benefit from having a classroom teacher and cohort of classmates. Starting the school year conservatively with a 2 day/week half-capacity option will open the in-person school experience to the broadest range of students, given the varying comfort levels of LMSD families. **It is therefore the most equitable option available.**

If, after a period of months, our area remains free from a resurgence, then we would have a data-driven basis for increasing to 5 days/week. This measured approach is more sensible than starting with 5 days/week and hoping for the best with a plan to backpedal if need be. **It is therefore also the most logical option available.**

Thank you for your time in considering my views. I very much appreciate your service to our school district and community, especially in these extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Sincerely,
Carrie Supple

As a parent of 2 elementary age children in LMSD ; there are many concerns regarding safety of the plan to re open fully in fall term.

-With school population as it currently stands ; social distancing will not be possible at full capacity; this would not be compliant with state safety guidelines.

-Ventilation at PWE is not a full HVAC system , not allowing for air to be removed as filtered air is coming into the rooms...UNIVENTs and MERV 13 , are not adequate to maintaining air quality , or removal of potential contaminated air particles. Additionally population of over 50% in school as stated in the LMSD safety plan negates the possibility of maintaining optimal air quality.This will be a certain contamination risk for all.

-The district should be considered a more robust hybrid model , provided by LMSD staff- which is the main reason most families move to this school district. Not to have our children be taught by a county service provider, MCIU, whose specialty is not education and not why we pay tax funds to LM for education.

Potential illness , harm and death is possible for all staff , children, parents And community at large if this full re open is not reconsidered.

Regards,
Yuderca Lopez-Watts

I have a rising third and first grader at Penn Valley Elementary School. Both as a parent and as a citizen of Lower Merion Township, I fully support the LMSD Health and Safety Plan dated July 17, 2020 (the "Plan"). In providing my support, I wish to express the following factors underlying my enthusiasm for the Plan:

- The Plan reasonably considers the needs of and provides adequate protections to all stakeholders in this community. In particular, it provides families in the School District equal access to education by offering families, who may have health and safety concerns with in-class instruction during the current environment, the option to enroll in District-sponsored online learning.
- The Plan gives recognition to one of the core missions of education at the elementary school level, socialization and appreciating one's membership in a physical community. A continuation of online learning will more likely than not irreparably condition our adolescent students, who are not sufficiently mature at this stage of development, to further undervalue and ignore the importance of the physical world.
- The Plan, as a whole, gives recognition to the mental wellness of our students and balances that with their physical safety. High schoolers, middle schoolers and elementary students all alike shared an immense mental and emotional toll this past Spring during online learning. The Plan provides some semblance of normalcy to our students, which is vital in providing the conditions to enable all students of the School District to thrive and fulfill their full potential.

Finally, I'd like to conclude by expressing that my property happens to directly border Penn Valley Elementary School. With in-class instruction, I fully recognize the volume of human traffic that will occur in close proximity to my two boys, myself and my home. Nonetheless, I fully support the total reopening of all LMSD schools, as provided in the Plan during the Green Phase, because the Plan best positions our School District to move forward as a community through this pandemic.

Best regards,
David Yoon
Penn Valley

As a school psychologist and Pennsylvania Public School District employee, I am extremely disappointed to see the LMSD Health and Safety Plan put out for approval by the School Board. As a result of my employment position, I am aware that a lot of time and effort were spent drafting this 41 page document. I am also aware that minimal parent and staff input was collected and considered. To my knowledge surveys were not sent, polls were not taken. The components of this plan leave much speculation as to whether sending our children to your public schools is even in their best interest at this time. Lower Merion is consistently rated a top school district in PA; one of the key reasons we live in this area and chose to send our children (entering 2nd and 5th grades) to Penn Wynne Elementary School. For the number of students Lower Merion serves, the only school option, aside from in-person attendance, being an outside provider's virtual learning program is inappropriate.

Presenting a Health and Safety Plan proposal that specifically states that safety standards cannot be met unless 50% of the student population is not present is an extremely ludicrous offer. Although I plan on listening to the information session Wednesday morning regarding the MCIU's virtual MVP program, not one good report or aspect has been noted by any district resident who has had a child previously attend a MCIU's virtual program. You are using scare tactics towards your families and our students in an attempt to lure us to send our children to a virtual program that has been described by families as insufficient. It would be a disgrace for the School Board and the Department of Education to approve such a plan. Rather than outsourcing teaching, this would be a more enticing proposal to families when trying to reduce the numbers for typical in-person education. You are failing your students, your community, and your staff by not offering virtual asynchronous and synchronous programs provided by the extremely professional and competent Lower Merion School District faculty.

At this time, with current research and reports, there has been much noted with higher risks for COVID-19 in older students as well as all individuals suffering from an additional health concern. Why hasn't a proposal been made to support K-5th grade student in-person learning? Why hasn't the school district focused efforts on developing virtual learning skills that would provide instruction to our students? Teachers with specific needs, including health needs as well as child care needs, should be given the option to provide remote instruction to the families that chose this route for their students. Outsourcing a Lower Merion education to a virtual program that is serving all of Montgomery County is an in-justice to everyone who lives in and funds the Lower Merion School District.

I hope that you will re-consider virtual options and daily in-person learning (during both yellow and green) for younger students in order to ensure the health, safety, and security of your students, district families, and staff.

Sincerely,
Dr. Elana E. Weinstein
Wynnewood

Please accept these bullet point notes of my concerns as a parent to the LMSD Re-Opening Plan. I have one rising 4th grader at Gladwyne and 2 students at WVMS next year (6th & 8th).

- I do not support a return of all students full-time in "Green." Even in green, the public health professionals advise social distancing. As that is not an option for LMSD, full return should also not be an option.
- I do not support the outsourcing of the virtual curriculum to the MCIU. The educational standards of LMSD exceeds the state minimums and allowing students to fall behind via MCIU is a short-sighted solution.
- By offering a subpar virtual option and creating the possibility of a premature full opening, the district is driving families to charter schools and I understand that will have negative impacts financially for several years.
- Any on-time opening should account for families going on vacation over Labor Day to potential "hot spots" around the country. Consideration should be given to a virtual "soft opening" to allow teachers to learn and adjust to new protocols.
- The priority for in-person learning should be given to students who need in-person learning. To be clear -- my children do not fall into that category. My children can be patient so the students who need it more can be accommodated.
- The hybrid scenario should be THE scenario. Adding additional in-person days later can be done. But if the district does a full open and people get sick or die, there is no going back. You can't unring that bell.

I do not envy you this task. But I sincerely hope that you do the right thing. Not the easy thing; not the thing that will make fewer people mad. The right thing.

Thank you,
Lynn Zack

I am appalled that although the school board is unwilling to meet in person for a single evening in which social distancing would be easy to respect, the school is proposing to have our children meet in person every day at 100% capacity. If you vote to pass this "green" option, then you are a hypocrite who puts the best interest of yourself and other adults above that of the children we elected you to look out for.

The cases of COVID are skyrocketing everywhere that opens. It is unwise and irresponsible to open the doors to our schools at 100% capacity and think it will be any different than anywhere else. I understand the difficulty around parental schedules and convenience, but I strongly believe the "yellow" plan of operating at 50% capacity to allow social distancing and using two-day cohorts is best. People object to change, but this will become a new normal, a recurring and dependable schedule and parents and the community will be able to adjust. It will be far more difficult to adjust when we are changing to yellow in the middle of a week, every few weeks, with little or no advance notice. I don't think people realize it is virtually impossible for us to remain in green after reopening schools and churches and other group gathering places.

I implore you to make the decision that is more likely to keep our children, and in turn our communities, safe and healthy. Do NOT vote to open schools at 100% in-person capacity.

Thank you.

Stacy Gavin
Parent of a 7th grader at Bala Cynwyd

Thank you for your response. I truly appreciate your time. And I will preface this email with the recognition that there is no perfect plan. However that being said, we have reviewed the LMSD Health and Safety Plan and have questions/concerns. I will try to be brief.

1. We are concerned that there is no option to open in a hybrid model while in the Green phase. It seems that we should have an option to be preventative and begin school with a strong plan to keep kids in school as long as possible. The plan acknowledges (in multiple places) that it is not possible to socially distance with all children in school. This is counter to recommendations by PA and others. It is worrisome especially for older students (high school) who will change classrooms all day.
2. It is disappointing that there was never a survey sent to parents to collect input. If we are able to open school for children who need/desire to be there and offer a strong remote learning option for those who can or choose to be virtual, then we can provide for all students in a safe and consistent manner. Fairfax County, VA just achieved this with a 50/50 enrollment split (and a strong, synchronous virtual program).
3. The MCIU option is inadequate and it is disappointing that this is what is being offered to LMSD students who would potentially entertain virtually learning.
4. There is no language that explains the criteria for moving between green, yellow, and red phases.
5. The testing and tracing plan is inadequate as there is no requirement for testing and/or reporting tied to symptom screening. In addition, can Montgomery County support a robust testing and tracing program once we enter respiratory virus season? Without rapid turn-around times, testing will be a barrier.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Tracey Polsky, MD PhD and Daniel Polsky, PhD

Hello, my name is Erin Ward and I will have two children in elementary school this fall (Cynwyd) I am writing because I was wondering if our district like many other of our neighbors will be sending out any polls etc. to see what the population feels about the re-opening? I personally do not feel safe starting with a full time option - as we have seen green is still in a state of rising numbers and wondering if there is any consideration being made to that?

In addition, wondering what the plans will be to bring students back- even if we can be in a hybrid model for green, perhaps you can use the fields for example at BCMS for Cynwyd and Middle School? Or other open area spaces for outdoor learning when appropriate? Re-design the playground to encourage things like that- just wondering in addition if you can commit to 6 feet of social distance in the classroom?

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter. I have been very impressed by the quality of education my children have received throughout the pandemic- and the communication overall -and hearing your plans to date without any parent input has been surprising and very disappointing. Hoping that we can all work together to get our voices heard in a very sensitive and important time.

Thank you. Best, Erin Ward

What the board is thinking of doing is wrong and put people in harms way
Gloria Lassiter

My name is Stacy Walinsky. My son is going into second grade at cynwyd elementary school. He is in autistic support with other pull outs. I am strongly on for full reopen in the fall. It's crucial for my son to go to school everyday. He regressed bc virtual was not the right fit for him. And, I know he was not alone. To wait for a vaccine to fully open is unrealistic. You gave other options for parents if they don't feel comfortable. Let then use the other options. They should not dictate for all the students. And, not all families can afford tutors or babysitters. Please hold onto your grounds with a full reopen !! There are plenty students who need in person. Don't penalize them for other parents not wanting it!

On behalf of the Committee for Special Education of LMSD, we submit the attached for review and consideration by the LMSD School Board and LMSD administration.

The Committee for Special Education conducted three parent feedback sessions for parents/guardians of students with GIEP/IEP/504s. During these sessions we conducted a two question poll regarding: 1) Experience from last Spring and 2) What they are considering now in terms of making a decision for the upcoming school year. We also asked for their top two concerns were heading into the Fall and what their expectations are for the LMSD in addressing these concerns.

KEY FINDINGS & TAKEAWAYS

- Majority of attendees reported that during the spring, their child receiving Special Education or Gifted Services did not benefit as much as they would in-person
- More than half of these parents have not yet chosen their education option based on the available information as of July 17
- Qualitative comments indicates a need for more information in general and more specifically to special education and the provision of IEP supports and services

The summary of the feedback is enclosed in the attached slide deck. The last slide has CSE's "ASKS" based on parent feedback.

Thanks,
Marta Villarraga
CSE Secretary

**The attached PowerPoint has been sent to the Board for their review.*

I am sad and worried that district decisions are being made without input from teachers, staff, parents, and students.

These are unprecedented times and I feel it is of the utmost importance to consider this decision from all points of view.

I think the district meeting should be open to comments on zoom.

Thomas Popko

I am writing to express my concerns about the reopening plan. As a parent of two LMHS students, I would love for school to have a full reopening in September, but ONLY if proper social distancing can be achieved. Since this is not possible if all students are in school at the same time, the only plan that

makes sense to me is to enact the hybrid scenario. This would enable students to meet with their teachers in person and socialize with their peers while maintaining the social distancing that public health experts advise is necessary during this pandemic. I urge you to proceed cautiously even if Montgomery County is still in the "Green Phase" in September. I fear that bringing all students back to school together will result in more illness for students and staff, with a greater potential to necessitate another complete shutdown, which I am certain we all want to avoid.

Also, what are the plans regarding music courses (choir and orchestra) where students would be singing or blowing into instruments?

Thank you for your consideration and for all the hard work you have done and are continuing to do for LMSD.

Andrea Fox
Bala Cynwyd

I have 4 children in the lower Merion school district. Two are in elementary school and two are in high school. I want my children to go back to the classroom however I do not want my children going back if it's going to be 100% capacity. Children And teachers and staff need to maintain social distancing at all times while in school. There is no way that can be done with 100% return. I beg you to please institute a two phase plan with kids going two days a week and virtual learning the remainder. Please, for the health and safety's of all our children and teachers, be smart about this plan.

Thank you,
Michelle Harmon

I know that you are set to vote on the district's proposed Health and Safety Plan, and with the opening of schools only eight weeks away, I can understand the sense of urgency you may be feeling to approve the plan.

I, too, have been waiting anxiously for word from the district about reopening -- I wanted to share what information I could with my husband and my son, who is entering kindergarten this year. But as I read the plan, the hopes I had for a safe and thoughtful start to the 20-21 school year were replaced with feelings of anxiety and confusion. And questions, so many questions, but the one I kept coming back to is this:

After four months, this is the best the district had to offer?

Yes, of course it is impossible to eliminate the risk of picking up the virus in a school setting, but as a taxpayer, parent and educator, I expected more effort and planning around mitigating the spread of the virus, especially with a full return to school. For instance, in the domain of "Cleaning, Sanitizing, Disinfecting, and Ventilation," the district writes in its summation that "...LMSD will increase the levels of ventilation and filtration in its existing HVAC equipment subject to capacity limits on the existing systems, including the installation of MERV 13 filters. It will be challenging to maximize the optimal levels of ventilation with full return of students and more feasible will [sic] a decreased number of students. The district is exploring the purchase of bipolar ionization technology to enhance air-quality in the schools. The district is also considering the purchase of air-filtration systems for the nursing offices that will create a negative pressure

environment in alignment with OSHA and TB standards" (p. 7, para. 1). We already know the district intends to open fully, yet instead of having tools in place to alleviate the ventilation challenges it is "exploring" and is "considering" systems...

Meanwhile, the school year begins in eight weeks.

Another area of concern is the district's social distancing protocols, which, by its own language, won't be as effective with schools reopening at full capacity: "When 50% or less of students are present at school, a minimum of 6 feet can be provided in the school setting. If there is full attendance, 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained in many areas of the school setting" (p. 11, para. 1). In fact, the plan acknowledges operating at half capacity would help the district better meet the governor's mandate and Montgomery County Office of Public Health guidelines (p. 11, para. 1-2), yet the plan is still for a full opening. This, despite emerging concerns about airborne spread of the virus and research that shows certain face coverings do a better job of catching droplets and aerosols than others.

But even more worrisome is the lack of community input and involvement in the creation of the plan. The state encouraged the district "...to make extra effort to engage representatives from every stakeholder group (i.e., administrators, teachers, support staff, students, families, community health official or other partners), with a special focus on ensuring that the voices of underrepresented and historically marginalized stakeholder groups are prioritized," yet no students, families, teachers, or community health officials are credited as members of the plan development team (p. 5). That in and of itself is off-putting.

If it's possible, the board should postpone a decision on the plan until the district can address many of the concerns parents have, and the district should not delay.

The school year begins in eight weeks.

Sincerely,
Annette Santiago-Michaels
Wynnewood, PA 19096

Thanks for your efforts to plan the 2020-2021 school year in these difficult times. I'm disappointed and surprised that the plan you're working on involves 100% of the student body in school in person and hoping that you will consider a plan that staggers students as well as a better online virtual academy than what you're currently offering. We are now looking at whether to enroll in the virtual academy or seek out an independent cyber school for our rising Gladwyne first grader. I'm seeing that the academy you're partnering does not have good reviews from parents unfortunately.

Thank you,
Leila Vaughan

I am a parent with two children enrolled in the LMSD and I would like to share my deep concerns of the school reopening plan for the Fall.

Based on the earlier email correspondents from the school district, it appears that we are heading to open in person at full capacity in the fall, with a virtual option for students who prefer not to attend school in person. This plan sounds good for two seconds but it provides no real solution other than

sounding superficially considerate with “options”. First of all, in person teaching is a no-go. It is true that our county’s curve is relatively flat at this point. Let’s not forget that this is only possible when all of us are practicing social distancing and avoiding any sort of large gathering, such as attending school and getting on buses together. Once we open for in person teaching (at full capacity no less), it’s only a matter of time that the case number is going to spike up again and schools have to close as a result. Secondly, from what has been released from the school district regarding LMVA, it is only designed to achieve minimum requirement imposed by the state, which is going to be subpar compared to the usual LMSD teaching standards. It’s effectively penalizing students and families who value personal and public safety during this unprecedented pandemic.

Instead of pretending to offer options, the school district should have sent out surveys among parents to at least hear our inputs. I have seen no communication in that nature so far, which is very strange as we the parents should at least have some say as to whether we feel safe sending kids back to school in person, no less than whether teachers feel safe going back to teach in person. And the reasonable plan should be going all virtual in the Fall, and providing in person options for families of essential workers or others who choose to opt-in. And instead of outsourcing virtual teaching to third party (who appears to have very mediocre review among parents who have used it), the school district should have used the summer time to better prepare the great teachers of LMSD to plan for virtual learnings so that it will be more effective compared to the experience in the Spring. There are many creative ways to make virtual teaching successful, and our teachers are willing and able to provide successful virtual teaching if the school district puts its attention and energy on the right issues. And families who choose the online education option should not have to sacrifice their kids’ education for the sake of doing the social good.

I urge you to consider science and facts, and more importantly, to think ahead of the curve and plan preemptively and responsibly.

Regards,

Freda (Qingyi) Song Drechsler, PhD

Thank you for your efforts to plan for the school year under such difficult circumstances. I appreciate your hard work and the complexity (impossibility!) of the task. However, as the parent of an LMHS student, I am concerned and dismayed by a key component of the district’s Health and Safety Plan—the statement on pg. 11 that “when 50% or less of students are present at school, a minimum of 6 feet can be provided in the school setting. If there is full attendance, 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained in many areas of the school setting.” I know enrollments in the Virtual Academy will reduce the number of in-person students, but surely not by half or more, so it seems that under your plan students will not be properly distanced at 6 feet as recommended in the latest guidance from the Pennsylvania DOH on 7/16 and Montgomery County on 7/15. Yes, we could opt for the Virtual Academy if we are concerned—but this amounts to a choice between ensuring the health and safety of our son and his (higher-risk) family members, but with an inferior educational modality that is also not provided by LMHS teachers; or, send him for a satisfactory educational experience in conditions that are likely to spread the virus.

Especially after Philadelphia and other districts have opted for hybrid models in recent days, and with virus cases rising and only likely to continue doing so, I expected LMSD to do something similar, especially because you already have developed the hybrid idea for a “yellow” scenario. I understand that the hybrid option brings hardship for working parents of younger children (in comparison with a full-time return of students); truly there is no perfect solution here. However, the hybrid model would provide the vast majority of students with a solid mix of in-person and remote learning from their LM

teachers (much better than only remote—though it would be good to maintain that option for families that need it) and it would provide lower densities and be safer for all, including school staff. This not only seems the best overall balance between education and health; it is likely more sustainable, in the sense that re-opening in ways that are not fully safe may spread the virus and cause the district to have to retreat to all remote anyway.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Spencer

--

I am absolutely dismayed at the stated current plan to reopen the district to 5 days a week, in-person instruction for all students. This is a public health disaster in the making, and not unforeseeable.

Coronavirus is very much still active in our state and in our region and is spreading at devastating speed through communities that are no more than a short plane ride away. Sadly, too many people are either openly hostile to masking and social distancing or are growing weary and lax with precautions. Opening schools to all students is a near guarantee that infection rates will rise —sparking illness, hospitalizations, and even deaths.

Scientists are working tirelessly to understand this virus and devise better treatments and protocols and hopefully a vaccine. Our responsibility is to give scientists the time they need. And the latest science doesn't seem to favor in-person schooling at near-full capacity. Children ages ten and above are now thought to transmit the virus at least as easily as adults, and more silently. Even young children aren't a viral dead-end.

The district's number one priority should be to the safety of their staff, students, families and community. I ask you to please consider reframing your plan to focus on protecting those most vulnerable — whether from the virus or from academic loss (for whatever reason) — and to limit live instruction to those students most at need. Teachers should be given the time to develop the best online instruction they can. Every teacher, therapist, and school staff member I know is terrified and for good reason.

Normalcy, or near normalcy, is not achievable. Right now, we're still at survival. Please, consider that that should be our first goal. Some kids in this district need in-person school to be safe, but most don't. Five days a week for all students is a recipe for disaster.

Finally, our family's experience with the MVA program was disappointing at best. It is not an acceptable alternative. Give families our beloved LMSD teachers, and give our beloved LMSD teachers the opportunity to teach our children virtually the best they can without fearing for their own safety or that of their families or students.

I appreciate your time and devotion to our children. Please do not make this reckless decision. You hold the health of your entire community in your hands.

Sincerely,
Ilana Brookshier

- > As you may know, a large number of parents and community members only recently became aware about your vote tonight on the health and safety plan.
- >
- > This is clearly a critically important issue and should have warranted significant parent, teacher, and community discussion and fact finding. Your choice to effectively “hide” this vote and Plan on the Board website is not an acceptable way to communicate with your stakeholders. We expect transparency and you must do better.
- >
- > Regarding your vote tonight, I offer this.
- >
- > At this point in the pandemic, 5 DAYS IN SCHOOL IS NOT ACCEPTABLE. This is an unsafe and negligent course of action.
- >
- > The hybrid, or preferably fully virtual option is the only way to go at this time.
- >
- > Finally, please consider this. You are potentially forcing kids, parents, and staff to physically return to a building for 6 plus hours a day and risk their lives and their families lives in doing so. Meanwhile, you refuse to meet in person for a few hours a month because it’s not safe. I find this ironic and completely unacceptable.
- >
- > Sincerely
- >
- > Eric Lowry

I fully support the option to go back to school 5 days a week in the green phase, while yellow is in shifts. Our children are missing out on an education while at home with 1 working parent, 1 essential working parent and multiple siblings with IEPs. Our community's future is dependent on education of our children.

Thank you,
 Andrea Burch
 Mother of 3 at BHES

I have been a parent in LMSD for 15 years, and I currently have 3 children enrolled in LM schools. My family has had the opportunity to learn, grow, and be challenged through their time in the district.

This all changed last year, and I am very concerned about the upcoming school year.

I work in health care, and I am very well aware of the challenges faced during the initial phase of the pandemic. I tried to be very supportive of our teachers, administration, and the counseling services.

I feel LMHS did a fair job. My girls were enrolled in AP classes and they are able to motivate themselves, so they were ‘fine’.

I am worried about what to expect their senior year with regards to counseling services and preparedness for college.

I feel that Welsh Valley did not meet a basic standard of education and I was very disappointed with our experience.

The team of educators seemed to have no communication amongst each other. There were weeks with minimal (5 minutes) live instruction, and there was no focus on organization or learning. I am very concerned with the quality of education for this coming year at WV.

I do not understand why there was not more "in person" instruction, why the educators did not meet weekly to establish a curriculum and plan for their teams, and why the communication with parents was so lacking.

I need to see that LM is making a comprehensive plan for the upcoming school year and that any online or virtual component will be taught by the high quality LMSD educators, which is why I reside in this township.

I am currently researching charter options as I feel the MCIU option is not up to quality standards of LMSD.

Thank you
Melissa Gale

If the hybrid model is chosen for reopening, how will the district determine which students will attend on each day? Will the district be able to ensure that students are attending school with at least two friends to ensure the child is properly socializing and to avoid additional mental health issues during these trying times?

Pamela Mebane
Children at LMHS and BC

I am concerned to learn that schools may open at full capacity, meaning the CDC guidelines will not and cannot be adhered to. I have two children and PWES. Please reconsider the hybrid model, which may be the only real option for safety. Thank you.

Karen Mavros

I am a mom of two boys at Belmont Hills Elementary School (incoming 2nd and 5th graders this fall) and I am also a pediatrician.

The most prudent way to reopen LM schools is the hybrid model (2 full days of one pod of students at half capacity, deep cleaning mid week, and then 2 full days of the second pod at half capacity).

As a mom, I would love for my boys to get some in-person instruction and benefit from interacting with the wonderful teachers and staff at BHES in addition to their peers in a safe, socially distanced way. As a pediatrician, I want that for all children and students IN A SAFE WAY.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) feels all children really need to be in school for a myriad of reasons but only if that can be accomplished in a safe, sustainable way during the pandemic. The AAP would not endorse full capacity 5 days per week when that means that kids cannot maintain social distancing guidelines in classrooms, on buses, or while having meals when their masks are off.

If LMSD's goal is to have every child in school each day, then it makes much more sense to have half the students go to school from 9am-12pm and then the other half go to school from 1-4pm. That would mean that LMSD does not have to deal with lunch, the kids can maintain social distancing in their classrooms, etc. The cleaning would have to be more minimal but that would still constitute a better solution than the proposed model.

What concerns me most is that it seems LMSD is pushing the virtual academy to solve its social distancing problems without having to institute a hybrid model. Is that really what you/we want? To have parents sign their children up for virtual academy right now because they do not feel the full

capacity model is safe and have those children miss out on all the enrichment that comes from physically being at school?

LMSD is a wonderful school district and it should be instituting the safest, most sustainable model for its students and teachers/staff. If the hybrid model is instituted and goes smoothly, LMSD can always decide to have students in the building for longer periods of time or additional days. No parent or teacher is going to argue with that!

Instituting the full capacity 5 days per week model does not make sense during a pandemic, where cases are surging in certain parts of the country (and world) because social distancing measures are not being maintained and/or masks are not being worn.

Many thanks for all of your continued hard work on behalf of LMSD and thank you for considering my thoughts.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kara Jolley

Schools should not be opening fully if they don't have the space to distance as recommended.

In my opinion schools should not be opening until coronavirus cases are not on the rise in the state. What makes best sense is for OUR teachers to be facilitating online instruction and to facilitate online instruction in school buildings for students whose parents need childcare or for students who need support services. This would involve having IAs to monitor socially distanced groups of children on laptops and completing work.

Sarah Agron

We would like to register our strong disapproval for the current Health and Safety plan being presented at this evening's meeting.

This makes absolutely no sense. Cases are ticking up in the state. Restaurants are not allowed to seat indoors at greater than 25% capacity and yet you expect us to send our children to school at full capacity with no guarantee of social distancing? Our only other option is asynchronous learning through a completely unknown 3rd party platform that gets lousy marks from every parent who has used it?

Can you do no better than this?

We would expect so much more from a top rated district. It seems as if you are kicking the can down the road until the next inevitable outbreak.

No option for hybrid learning until what seems to be a random pronouncement of "yellow"?

Do better.

Blair Sams

John Yearley

Parents of rising 7th grader WVMS

As a physician and concerned parent living in the district and sending my child to Penn Wynne ES, I read with great interest the recent plan released by the district dealing with school reopening plans in the fall. I can appreciate the enormity of this task and the concerns the LMSD had while making this plan. I do feel that there are several areas where the plan falls short. The idea of opening the school like normal while freely admitting that social distancing norms can't be achieved at near full capacity is foolhardy and borderline reckless. While families will undoubtedly opt for virtual schooling at that point, it may have helped to survey the parents beforehand to get a sense of the numbers that will opt

out to see if this plan is feasible. While the hybrid model is logistically challenging it is, in my opinion, the best option going into the fall. Obviously this will create challenges on the schools end and the parents end with regards to child care on non school days, but it offers the best chance for children to not stunt their social and educational development while also allowing for agreed upon safety precautions.

I know this situation has not been easy but I felt like it could have been better handled and the process could have been more transparent. We love living in LM and value the education offered here. We could have easily sent our son to private schools but as a product of public education, value the benefits offered in public school.

I hope that you will re-evaluate your decision.

Finally, I also would assume that if it is safe enough for our children to be packed into schools without regard to adequate space, the LM school board will soon be doing away with the Zoom meetings in favor of more traditional in person meetings with appropriate time for in person citizen comments. Seems only logical.

Thank you for your consideration

Nicholas Orfanidis

As a parent of two LMSD students, rising 1st grader and 4th grader at Penn Wynne, I am deeply concerned by the reopening guidelines and plan recently released by the district. We are a half French family and know what is happening around the world with schools and we feel that the options we have been given are not good. We do not wish to hybrid. Our 1st grader should be getting 90 minutes of an IEP/day and there is no way the hybrid method will be able to provide her with the stable learning environment she needs nor do we feel it is safe to have either one of our kids in school, as we also live with aging "grandparents" with health issues. There is no way to have our kids go to school and not compromise our living situation. We have no choice but to pick a virtual option. In the spring, our daughter only received 30 minutes/day for her IEP. We hope that she will be able to work with PW staff more often, but doubt that there is a way to properly organize this with the Virtual Academy. We want to do school virtually but are distressed that the only option that will allow her to do her IEP with the school, thus with people who know her, is by using the Virtual Academy MIUV which we understand from a myriad of parents who have used them that the courses are subpar and the teachers who teach are not stable. We would prefer a virtual model that is teacher led using LMSD staff and in a virtual class setting, at least once a week, so that our kids can have classmates and be part of the PW community. There are many teachers with whom we have communicated who do not at all wish to be in school teaching. It seems that if you were to ask, you would have more than enough staff to run virtually. And if this was an option, a majority of students who be comfortable choosing virtual learning and that would reduce the numbers who have no other option than to physically attend the school, making it a much safer environment for all.

We have participated in zooms about children with IEPs and how to best meet their needs.

Also, if we do have no choice but to sign up for the Virtual Academy and the school has a full virtual option, we would want to opt into that and not do the Virtual Academy. It seems unfair for us to choose a mediocre option without knowing, in a timely fashion, what the school district will be doing coming opening day.

We feel that with only the Virtual Academy, our children will not be getting a quality district education.

Could you please clarify these things:

It is not clear whether or not a student can opt back into in-person schooling before the first day of

school if they have initially chosen LMVA. Why was the decision made to outsource the (for most students) temporary, "this-year-only" solution LMVA to the MCIU? If it was because they had a plan in place already, why not instead take their platform as a framework to develop one operated by the district? The district has said they will support students staying connected with other students, which implies that it is up to the parents to keep them connected and that they will not be providing these avenues. If the district is not taking steps for such, why claim it as a selling/reassurance point for LMVA? Great care was taken by the staff to assign students to next year's home rooms based on friendships (amongst other things). Will these assignments be kept upon return to the home school if leaving LMVA at the end of the semester? Will they be considered when assigning them LMVA "classrooms"? Will there even be a homeroom equivalent in LMVA, at least at the elementary level? This daily connection to other students, even if just on Zoom for a morning meeting, was key to maintaining social connection in the spring. Will the students have a touchstone at their home school when at LMVA such as the homeroom teacher to which they were initially assigned?

We are very disappointed with what is happening and we sincerely hope that the district will find its own virtual solution so that our kids can be socialized within a virtual community of their peers and so they will receive a proper LMSD education with the best staff possible, enabling them to have equal access to the quality education we have come to know and to ensure that our daughter gets to work with the specialized staff for her IEP and receive the promised care we expect.

Thank you for your time,

Meredith Tolan
Stéphane Dichamp

I, like many parents, ache to send my child back to school. Full time. But I will only do this when it is safe. As exemplified by the purchase of property to build a new school, our schools are already over capacity. Like each year before it, the size of the student body across the district will increase this year. This tells me our schools do not offer inadequate space to social distance.

Throw in my observance of children in the neighborhood, enough don't wear masks. Even if this is a small majority, it's enough to be concerned about the spread of the virus.

For the safety of those in this community, The safety of the people, the safety of the teachers and other school employees, please vote No against a full reopening.

Look. I get the issues with remote learning. I really do. But the health and welfare of our community has to come first.

Thanks for your time and hard work in these efforts.

Rob Jacobson

WATCH THIS!!! (Link has been given to the Board for their review)

Not only am I disgusted with your plan to 100% open, I am even more disgusted with your failure to allow public comment at the Board Meeting tonight. Just disgraceful for elected officials to operate this way. Shame on you.

Cory Halpern

Please for the safety of our community, kids, teachers please follow the PA state guidelines and CDC guidelines when considering the plan to reopen schools Thanks Laurence Suaud

How can schools reopen, full capacity, with the current guidelines issued by Gov Wolf and CDC guidelines about social distancing? Why isn't the 'hybrid' model being more seriously considered? What happens when a student, teacher, staff, family has a terrible outcome when contracting Covid, and the source is traced back to our schools?

We understand the complexity of the situation, but the science doesn't square with how our schools are built.

Just learned of this email/opportunity to voice our concerns, and thank you for allowing us the opportunity.

J. Skallen

We are all waiting with baited breath to find out the plan for the fall this year. While I desperately want my children (LMSD, one at GES, one starting WV and another at Harriton) to resume a normal schedule I am afraid it is not truly safe. Until there is a vaccine or mandatory ongoing protocol that includes testing for all children, staff and teachers I think there is too much risk. Yes, at any time there is risk of the flu, lice etc. none of these have the death rates that covid is seeing nor the unknown long lasting side effects.

While I am aware this is a very polarizing topic, I would be remiss not to share my feelings as a resident with three children in the school district. I would think it safest (understand face masks and social distancing and limited interactions will be the intent) NOT to return to school in person in September. With so many family's who work, and their work exposes them to a myriad of others, and faculty and staff with the same potential with whom they interact with, it seems like a recipe for disaster. The way that a contact virus works it has been proven repeatedly to distance people not bring them together for the potential of spread.

I think time now would be spent well ensuring students faculty and staff have a plan in place for remote school that exceeds the experience we had this past spring.

Much like the private schools last spring offered learning not impacted with smaller groups of on line classes we could split up the grades in to am and pm sessions for a smaller group and more intimate setting. I a sure there are a ton of ideas out there but hope that safety –of not just the children but faculty and staff is taken in to account.

Better safe than sorry. Even one case of covid could have disastrous consequences...even fatal.

Please consider this fall starting out with on line versus in person learning.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stacy Lustgarten

Will custodial staff be increased to meet the demand for “deep cleaning”? The current staff can barely keep up with routine custodial jobs

Danita Simon

I strongly oppose any plan that would place more children in a classroom than can be safely socially distanced. I am all for a five day per week schedule as long as half of the children sign up to do virtual learning at home.

If that will not be the case, then I encourage the board to approve a hybrid program with smaller class groupings for the beginning of school, regardless of whether we are in the green or yellow phase as a state.

Sincerely,

Lettie Switzer

We are writing to oppose the "Green" opening plan for LMSD which includes non-distanced, indoor instruction at full capacity with inadequate ventilation and cleaning. This plan goes against both state and CDC guidelines: "green" in this case does not mean "go."

While we are all for in-person instruction, a plan that communicates to parents that full-capacity instruction is safe is terrible for the community and will only speed total shutdown, at which point more cautious parents will be locked out of LMSD peer groups for the year, having chosen the Virtual Academy option.

The current "yellow" plan should be the plan in "green." Childcare considerations, which are crucial, should be handled alongside this issue: could the district provide on-site, outdoor childcare options for parents on hybrid days? I am unsure of what creative solutions are and are not logistically possible. We are, however, sure that the current plan will ask parents to do one of two things:

1. Gamble on their family's health in order to secure their child a LMSD teacher and peer group.
2. Opt for a sub-par virtual option not run by LMSD teachers.

As a front-line family we find this plan both inadequate and frankly insulting. What have we been sacrificing for all these months if it will be thrown away so quickly in September?

Sincerely,

Drs. Ari Friedman and Tara Mendola

I would love nothing more than to have all of our students back in school full-time. My daughter will be a sophomore and misses her friends, teachers, and even the classroom work. She especially misses art, theatre and music -- classes that are much harder to do well virtually.

That said, containment of COVID-19 is not going in the direction needed to make it safe to open schools for in-person instruction. I do not subscribe to the idea that sacrifices need to be made, especially not if those sacrifices mean the death of a student or teacher or one of their family members.

Recent history (i.e., the last six months) tells me that, if LMSD resumes even partial in-person classes, illness rates will skyrocket and we'll end up in full lockdown approximately 3-4 weeks after school starts. The data supports this.

Please listen to science.

My recommendation would be to deal with the issue on several fronts:

- identify those kids -- a small subset -- who truly need in-person school to succeed and arrange for on-site learning for only those students
- help organize small cyber-pods of families who co-quarantine so their kids can work together in-person while remaining safely in quarantine
- as before, schedule synchronous online learning opportunities for teachers and their students
- continue to provide asynchronous remote learning for most students

Thank you for listening.

Shannon K. Knight
Wynnewood

I have the following comments/questions related to 2020 reopening. I am sending this email simultaneously to several email addresses related to community feedback and the LMSD board. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Why hasn't a parent survey been circulated with respect to reopening?

How many people were on the parent task force related to re-opening and how were they selected?

What is the proposed curriculum content for the yellow phase when the children are not physically in school?

How involved have the teachers been in planning for virtual learning in either the yellow or the red phase?

Have the teachers been trained to date in the health and safety guidelines needed while the children are in school during the green and yellow phases? If yes, have they provided practical feedback on their implementation (ie, its possible or impossible to to implement them in full)? If no, when are you planning on training them and asking them for their practical feedback?

Is there synchronous learning planned for the yellow phase when the children are not physically in school? If so, who is leading the synchronous learning and what does it entail?

Are the virtual platforms in the LMVA and yellow phase distance learning the same platforms? If not, why, and how do they differ?

What is the virtual platform for the red phase? Will there be synchronous learning? If yes to synchronous learning, please elaborate on what that will entail.

Why is the district opening in green phase when the 41 page LMSD Health and Safety Plan concludes that proper social distancing cannot be achieved in the schools at full capacity?

With respect to LMVA, how do we access this online platform so we can take a look at what it contains/entails before parents commit to sign up for it?

Why was the LMVA outsourced to the intermediary unit rather than the school district establishing its own internal platform based on its in place curriculum?

Sincerely,

Cari Bryce

Mother of (rising 4th) and (incoming 1st) Merion Elementary

Based on the current comprehensive data that tweens and teens transmit corona virus at a much higher rate than kids under the age of 10* in conjunction with the decreasing needs of tweens and teens to be in school for 8 hours/day, I'm curious as to why a program of hybrid on-site learning with live virtual components has not been created for middle school and high school students? Why are the needs of elementary school students being grouped with high school students? **There is an opportunity to create a better and safer plan for our older kids and their teachers.** For example, why can't there be a rotation of classes being taught live/remotely in conjunction with part-time on-site learning resulting in a shortened school day that perhaps doesn't include lunch? Within this type of learning model, a broad range of needs could be served, discontinuity of education with corona virus surges could be addressed, and staff and students would be safer.

Is, being asked in the 11th hour for comment in reality just an opportunity for me to state on the record that I consider your extreme options: 100% asynchronous, pre-taped zombie learning or in school, unsafe, full time if Montgomery County is green, an absurdity? I'm disappointed that no comprehensive survey of teachers and families was conducted with results posted on the LMSD website regarding 2020 reopening plans. As a parent, I find that communication and transparency by LMSD has been unsatisfactory particularly in light of the efforts in neighboring districts. It appears that LMSD's exclusive process has resulted in my being asked to choose between two poor options.

I'm asking for and hoping that a robust virtual option in conjunction with kids being in school, socially distanced, part-time be made available for LMSD middle and high school students.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Jennifer Liebo

My name is Jill Ringold and I am the parent of a rising 7th grader and 10th grader; we have been in the district for 11 years. Although I now work in a different field, I am a trained public health educator and epidemiologist who worked in that field for many years. In fact, I had a career both at the CDC and in Bioterrorism after 9/11, where I developed the mass prophylaxis plan for the County of St. Louis. So I understand that there are many things above you, out of your control. I understand coordinating logistics on a high level where some constituency is going to be aggravated or upset by my decisions. And the decisions I was making were going to impact lives if we faced a bioterror attack. This is not unlike the situation you face.

The phases of red, yellow, green are going to continue to be fluid and there is not a magic line separating one from another. The categories themselves are not well vetted, as all of this is new and much is based on best guesses from those with pandemic and coronavirus expertise. But if we were to adhere to those categories, such as they are, and we cannot currently gather with more than 25 people in an indoor space

(such as an hour dining at a restaurant) than I am unclear on how you can mitigate enough risk to safely populate our schools with hundreds of children and staff for many hours every day.

Data about children not getting sick or transmitting the virus has proven to be false. When we test children at the same rate that we test adults, we find there is significant transmission. If you look at data from places in Florida and Georgia, you will note that children are testing positive in numbers much higher than previously reported. Further, the high school students are at the highest risk, with 15-17 year olds having the most cases, the most severe cases, and the most long term impact of any children. Likely because they are more similar to adults in their development, including their immune systems. And your buildings are full of actual adults! Your teachers, aids, staff and administrators are all adults of varying ages and health status. It's not as if the children somehow exist in a vacuum in the building so therefore it will be "safer."

I've heard professionals in my field refer to children "as only cases, not deaths" so "it's worth the risk" to "see what happens." Risk calculations on paper are different when you mirror them onto actual children. Families should be concerned and should be holding you to the highest level of accountability and demand thoughtful planning. Sending everyone back, into crowded busses and classrooms, all at once doesn't seem very thoughtful. I have not let my children see their friends other than in open, outdoor spaces - still 6ft or more apart - since this began. They want to know why it will now somehow be safe to be in school? They want to know if they might make me sick or get sick themselves? Will they infect their teachers? Or my husband, who works in a hospital with proper PPE and procedures to keep him safe at work. These are real concerns.

Your plan mentions ripping out lockers to widen hallways. It mentions asking teachers to not open windows so as to not aggravate the allergy and asthma students, although fresh air and air circulation appears to be helpful in reducing transmission. But you don't talk about developing a robust online system. You don't mention that the MCIU curriculum is subpar and is not an equivalent for our children. My daughter took a course this summer and the curriculum was outdated, at times inaccurate or demeaning, and there was literally 2 minutes of communication with an instructor. Why is a hybrid model or a virtual program that is LMSD teacher-led not being considered with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities?

LMSD is a district that has always expected excellence. Your plan does not live up to your standards. Do more. Do better. We are all on a steep learning curve, including the scientists who realize this virus does not behave in textbook ways and are scrambling to catch up. Parents don't expect you to have a perfect solution - there isn't one - but we expect you to create a plan as if your own health and safety depended on it.

Thank you,

Jill Ringold
Merion Station, PA 19066

I was surprised to learn, via a facebook group not official communication, that the board is considering approval of LMSD's health and safety plan since parents, guardians, and residents have not been given an opportunity to review or provide feedback on a draft. I hope the school board will delay approval until that opportunity is given as I'm concerned few if any people have had the time to read and consider the implications of the plan.

However, since I suspect you will support the administration's request unanimously without consideration or dissent I do feel the need to offer at least some comment that can go on record. This plan seems to be self serving in that it meets the state requirements but contains not one sentence of realistic or creative attempts to identify how to support health and safety in our schools. Instead this appears to be three plans for three different "phases" which will apparently not even be used by the state moving forward. Do any of you actually think we can have all in-person instruction at this point or

anytime in the next year? If you do, you need to say more about how teachers, staff, and students will be protected when this plan plainly states social distancing cannot be guaranteed unless attendance is at 50%.

I understand this is a difficult and seemingly impossible situation and that everyone won't be happy regardless of the choices you all make, but let's be honest about that. Attempting to open to all in person only to have to immediately close classrooms, schools, or even the entire district as outbreaks occur will be totally disruptive for parents, guardians, and residents. How can we plan when we do not know what reopening phase we will be in come September or October or even January or March? You must acknowledge this difficulty and ask the administration to use the creativity and intelligence we expect of them.

I hope I'm wrong and this plan does not just get a rubber stamp. I hope you have a robust discussion with the administration about the failings of this "plan" and force them to answer for why it wasn't widely advertised with greater solicitation of public comment. We all know this school year is going to be a wash but let's not go stumbling into the Fall without a vision or plan for how we can make the most of a bad situation. Thank you, Micah Snead

I am a concerned parent in LMSD. I have two children who are rising third and fourth graders at Cynwyd Elementary School. Like many in LM, we are a family with two full-time working parents. We are frantic to know how school will be held for the coming academic year so that we can plan accordingly for our children.

With that being said, I find it shocking and incredibly disappointing that our School Board will be voting on a reopening plan without any input from LM parents and children, your most critical stakeholders. Our family chose to live in Lower Merion specifically for its schools. Our expectation for a Blue Ribbon school district is proactive and regular solicitation of input from parents to ensure that significant changes to school schedules, curricula, etc. will meet the needs of our community. These are not decisions that a school board should make in a vacuum, and one survey sent before the school term ended simply does not suffice. The virtual school plan that LM rolled out in the spring was entirely unacceptable, but we understood that the district had very little time to plan and therefore showed patience with our teachers who struggled through an incredibly disorganized end of school term.

We are fortunate to live in a community of intelligent parents who are dedicated to their children's education. It is inexcusable for LMSD to miss this unique opportunity to engage in interactive discussion with parents and students to formulate a plan that will work for all of our families. There is no way that a "one size fits all" plan will work, and LM simply can't plan for all scenarios unless all voices have been heard. Furthermore, LM must explore beyond the boundaries of our community to find "outside of the box" solutions. Particularly during unprecedented times such as these, to assume that we have all of the answers within LM is pretentious and naïve.

Please allow your families the opportunity to provide feedback on academic plans before decisions are considered final.

Regards,
Beth Giordano

My daughter is entering her junior year at LM. She has spent her entire student life in this district, and we love it. However, I do not feel it is safe to send her back in September. All signs indicate we are in for a serious resurgence of Covid 19.

I had hoped the students would do a combination of remote and on site learning this year, minimizing exposure to everyone and maintaining the high standards of education we expect of this district.

I am very unhappy with the outsourcing option of virtual learning. This is not equitable education. I am in the terrible position of choosing between my daughter's education and her health. I hate to think of the teachers and entire school staff also at risk.

Please give us a fair virtual educational option for our families.

Thank you,
Patricia Carlin

I welcome the decision to bring back all students, virtual for the lower grades is absolute horror and ineffective at the very best

--

Andre Langhorst
Wynnewood, PA

To whomever will read this with an open mind:

Schools MUST remain closed until we are safe from the spread of coronavirus disease 2019.

The proposals and recommendations put forth thus far are unrealistic and unsafe. Children are NOT robots who will stay 6 feet apart, keep masks on, wash hands without oversight (think the girls' and boys' rooms), sit facing forwards at all times etc etc etc. However, students WILL touch each other, cough and sneeze (outside of their mask), pick their nose and not wash their hands, go to the bathroom and not wash their hands, be up and around their classmates (not 6 feet apart) etc etc etc.

There WILL be a spread of this disease that will be traced back to a student or staff member if schools are open before COVID-19 is under control and it is not under control, even if Montgomery County is "green".

Time and effort preparing and planning for in-person school is a terrible and sinful waste of time when, before time runs out, efforts could be put into planning how to begin the year virtually --- because that, more than likely, will be the case.

Sincerely,
Alison Moyer
Wynnewood resident

Please bring the kids back FULL TIME!!!! Our children NEED to be in school to maintain mental and emotional health.

Jessica Ender
Parent of a 9th, 6th & 3rd grader

I am forwarding this to this address too I need to hear back from you ASAP.

The issue of a student name coming up in a meeting as to why you can't live stream is a non issue when you can tell people, as you did at the town hall, that they can't enter unless they agree not to mention a student's name.

How many times have you had to blank out a student name from a meeting in the last 5 years? Students comment at these meetings. Their names are not bleeped.

Please, please, please add the transparency. It is in everyone's best interest.

Adrian Seltzer

The [Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, 65 Pa.C.S. §§ 701-716](#), requires agencies to deliberate and take official action on agency business in an open and public meeting. It requires that meetings have prior notice and that the public can attend, participate, and comment before an agency takes that official action.

In light of the controversial nature of tonight's meeting and feedback from the town hall last week, I respectfully request that tonight's meeting be simulcast on YouTube. Zoom has that option along with the option of closed captioning. From feedback I have, this will be a meeting that people want to attend. By limiting the number of people who can attend by zoom you are in violation of the Sunshine Act. Opening the meeting to YouTube would solve that problem. It would also sort of solve the issue of prior notice since you could advertise the YouTube Channel.

There can be a posting that now student names are allowed to be mentioned.

I respectfully ask that you comply with the law.

Adrian Seltzer

Dear School Board Members,

I'm writing to you as a parent of a rising 1st grader and single parent to encourage you to open schools safely via robust virtual learning.

I thank you for your service and I appreciate the difficult situation we are all in. This week the stories are disasters in Israel, a multi-systemic inflammatory condition affecting disadvantaged children in Los Angeles, new South Korean studies, and the politicization of the school discussion.

It is hard to put personal concerns aside. Our foundation of safety is threatened. I am worried for my child. We just don't know the effects. A few studies from less densely populated areas of Europe which don't use large-scale HVAC systems and started school with low national numbers do not alleviate my concerns... at all. The

bottom line is that we are early in this pandemic; we haven't exposed large groups of kids to this virus in highly populated urban areas; nobody has. The preliminary reports about multi-systemic complications and long-term damage scare me.

I implore you to suggest starting virtual until there is more guidance and find solutions to problems without experimenting on our kids and teachers.

In our household virtual learning in Spring was positive. I believe my Kindergartener got an excellent education and the teachers did an excellent job in a time of crisis. My son met with Ms Steiner 's class every day, he pushed the mute buttons when told as did the other kids, attended specials and other classes. My son worked through and is still working through the home-learning materials for summer. We can do this!

We know enough about the virus and social distancing where we could continue to safely build on this foundation of virtual learning, for at least the first quarter, by offering safe, community-based solutions to students who need to meet with teachers for facilitated instruction, materials, or encouragement. We don't have to force a hybrid option that offers less instruction time than they get on a week of 2-hour delays during snow season. My first grader is now used to watching lessons on the computer and would benefit more from phonetics lessons where he could see the teachers' lips move with enthusiasm for teaching the letter sounds; I'd rather he see this than a masked, fearful teacher who has just been made responsible for overseeing a class of 6 and 7 year olds during a pandemic that is out of control in neighboring states.

We can't leave anyone behind. But we also need to be smart. The US did not act until the pandemic was out of control in Italy; people cited the low mortality rate in China or previous studies on other pandemics that had been localized. This has been the pattern: Wait until it gets bad in one area and then act. I don't want Lower Merion to be the example of where things went wrong for our children.

Thank you for YOUR service,

Deepa George

As a single parent of a LMES student, I am extremely concerned about the guidelines and plan recently shared by the district. I am certain you are receiving a significant amount of input from parents, staff, and students so I will try my best to be concise.

I believe that the Governor's phase system was primarily designed to address businesses and restaurant openings. It wasn't necessarily intended to instruct people about how to

interact with others. I think this is a misconception and as a result, people falsely believe “Green means go” and everything is back to pre-Covid normalcy. This is not the case.

Unfortunately, experts are predicting a second and perhaps third wave of outbreaks this coming school year and we need to do whatever we can to prevent this from happening to our kids, teachers, and school staff. Using “green” to signify a full 5 day, in person, school schedule is dangerous. Most importantly, it does not allow for social distancing as our enrollment, classrooms and class size are already at or above capacity. It also does not allow for proper cleaning and both put everyone at risk. We need to proceed with extreme caution.

A hybrid option which involves multiple cohorts of students, each cohort attending school 2 days per week and a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning on the other three days is a much better option.

The virtual option presented consists only of the MontCo Intermediate Unit virtual courses and is subpar at best. I would not consider this to be a viable option for my daughter. The content is not engaging. We choose to live in this district because of the reputation of LMSD. We are doing a disservice to our children if we do anything less than ensure the standards remain at the highest level possible. We deserve more.

Also, the thought of starting school right after labor day is also risky. How many families travel for vacation and therefore invite exposure from high risk areas? This exposure comes to the classroom with these kids. Do we have families quarantine 2 weeks before to ensure safety? Do we mandate no student, parent, teacher, other staff not travel to GA, FL, TX, NC etc???

Resources should be shifted to offer a hybrid model and a virtual program that is teacher led and a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. There are ways that this can work, be effective and keep our district safe. Many other neighboring districts and those within Montco are doing exactly this.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Marla Dissin

My name is Amy Scallon and I am the mother of two Merion Elementary School children, a rising 4th grader and a rising 2nd grader. As two working parents who work locally in education - I work with student teachers and my husband works for the School District of Philadelphia, we have been thinking about school reopening plans from many different angles for several weeks. I am writing to urge you to put forth a plan that focuses on the health and well-being of all our children and all of the school staff. That of course includes physical and emotional well-being. Specifically, if in-person instruction occurs there needs to be the ability for everyone to practice social distancing, which does not seem possible if all the kids are at school at the same time. And, if/when virtual learning occurs there needs to be a combination of challenging engaging synchronous and asynchronous instruction that includes small group leveled instruction, as there would be in an elementary school classroom. My children love school partially because they are naturally curious and partially because Merion has created a thoughtful engaging school environment. I am hopeful that, even given these extremely challenging times, the plan

that is divulged (hopefully sooner rather than later) will be focused on the well being of our children and all the school staff.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Scallon

To the Board Members:

Please take into consideration what other districts are doing in our area with regards to sending students back to school. While I understand that you want to normalize the school year as much as possible, I find it strange to push the students back full time when the virus is much more prevalent now than it was in March when the students went home full time. We should at least ease back into it to test the waters and see what issues come up. It may be too late to address unknown issues if everyone is already back at school from the start. Even in our Green status, we are still told to wear masks and socially distance. How can full classes of 30 students socially distance? Unless you are offering the same classes twice as many times then before which would bring the numbers down to 15 per class, how can a 30 person classes be practicing social distancing?

I also would like to point out that teacher and parent input is necessary in solving this issue. I heard plenty about the lights at Arnold's Field but nothing about an issue as important as this.

Thanks,
Rita Kotler

I hope you are all well and safe.

The fact that the meeting tonight will be held via Zoom because it is unsafe for us all to gather together underscores the concerns and shortcomings of the proposed Health & Safety Plan. Should more than 50% of students elect to return to school buildings in the "Green" phase, the lack of adequate distances inside the school facilities for teachers, staff and students mandates that the plan be rejected.

Because you will not know today how many students will be returning to the school buildings for the 2020-2021 school year, I do now know how you can adopt such a plan, as it is tantamount to sentencing our teachers, staff and students to exposure to unsafe conditions.

With over 6 weeks until the start of the school year there is still time to design a solution that will not risk the safety of so many while satisfying so few. I encourage you to think creatively and engage with the members of the community who want to have a workable solution to this very challenging problem. I encourage you to (1) Poll the community and (2) consider a model such as the one proposed here: (link has been shared with the Board of School directors)

Thank you.

Danielle Schweiloch

Narberth resident

Parent to children in Merion and BCMS

Dear Board and Community,

A vote on this health and safety plan at this time is premature, lacking sufficient time for public commentary and input, and is unacceptable and inconsistent with what neighboring districts are doing to address the needs of the community.

It's apparent that the board position regarding testing and contact tracing is that it is a county matter, and is therefore not part of an overall health and safety plan for reopening our schools. This is not acceptable.

It appears the board intends to fully open the schools at 100% capacity under the state "green" condition despite acknowledgement that it cannot meet the state guidelines for social distancing in classrooms or busses. This is not acceptable.

The virtual learning option being offered which requires an early commitment without any description of course content, instruction methodology or curriculum standards as they compare to the LMSD educational standards is also unacceptable.

The reliance on uncertified student supplied cloth masks as the primary mitigation when it is well documented that such masks are at best 60% effective at stopping the aerosol droplets that are the main means of infection is unacceptable.

If a child is required by the state to be inoculated against a range of diseases that are well understood and in control in order to even enroll in school, how does it make sense for kids to attend school when they may be carriers of, or subject to infection by an active pandemic virus for which the transmissibility and long term health effects are only just beginning to be better understood?

Globally, masks and distancing are the lowest bar as far as mitigation goes. Testing and tracing are proven to be the gold standard by which the pandemic has been successfully stopped or paused elsewhere in the world. And yet this standard is not part of the reopening plan. If the standard that has proven effective in other countries is not available, a different plan must be considered.

Having read the health and safety plan, I'm less than confident that a typical school day encumbered by the mitigations as described will be much of an improvement over distance learning when it comes to socialization, interaction and time for instruction once all the mitigations are in place.

While all the outlined precautions of the published plan proposal appear robust and well designed, it still sounds like a grand experiment with far too many unknowns for a rational person to feel confident about.

Here are a few of the questions that are now circulating publicly and that I am concerned about as well and expect answers from school leadership in addition to the plan you offer:

**This list of questions appears in a few public comments and has been removed from posting but referenced.*

- If a teacher tests positive for COVID-19 are they required to quarantine for 2-3 weeks? Is their sick leave covered, paid?
- If that teacher has 5 classes a day with 20 students each, do all 100 of those students need to then stay home and quarantine for 14 days?
- Do all 100 of those students now have to get tested? Who pays for those tests? Are they happening at school? How are the parents being notified? Does everyone in each of those kids' families need to get tested? Who pays for that?
- What if someone who lives in the same house as a teacher tests positive? Does that teacher now need to take 14 days off of work to quarantine? Is that time off covered? Paid?
- Where is the district going to find a substitute teacher who will work in a classroom full of exposed,

possibly infected students for substitute pay?

- Substitutes teach in multiple schools. What if they are diagnosed with COVID-19? Do all the kids in each school now have to quarantine and get tested? Who is going to pay for that?
- What if a student in your kid's class tests positive? What if your kid tests positive? Does every other student and teacher they have been around quarantine? Do we all get notified who is infected and when? Or because of HIPAA regulations are parents and teachers just going to get mysterious "may have been in contact" emails all year long?
- What is this stress going to do to our teachers? How does it affect their health and well-being? How does it affect their ability to teach? How does it affect the quality of education they are able to provide? What is it going to do to our children? What are the long-term effects of consistently being stressed out?
- How will it affect students and faculty when the first teacher in their school dies from this? The first parent of a student who brought it home? The first child?
- What about the strain of teaching in a classroom environment through a mask? Teachers will fatigue faster and therefore require more break time. • CoVid2 can remain airborne for up to 16 hours, thus far. How will the air be scrubbed/ filtered, particularly in the older schools like Bala Middle school?

--footnote

It is estimated that approximately:

30% of the teachers in the US are over 50.

16% of the total deaths in the US are people between the ages of 45-65.

Choices need to be made based on solid plans to move forward that do not put school staff, teachers AND STUDENTS in danger.

Note that if only .02% of U.S. children die from going back to school (Vice-President and Sec. Devos statement) that is 14,740 children.

I'm looking forward to hearing answers and further explanations from the board at tonight's meeting.

Sincerely,

Tony Sacksteder

Tax Payer, voter and concerned parent of 2 LMSD students.

2 comments were sent from Ms.Desper:

#1

I would like to express my concerns with the plan for opening put forth by the district. Without the pandemic every year we parents have to deal with the virus the kids bring home. I am in healthcare on the frontline I understand that most children even if they get the Corona Virus might be okay, but it's not okay to take the risk with our children. Some of them might not be okay and they will most definitely bring it home to other family members. Are we as parents supposed to be okay with this risk?? How about the teachers and the risk your putting them in??? This is not a good plan. What happen to the two days a week in person plan? Even that isn't ideal but it's better than what your trying to do. Do you even have the cleaning supplies and sanitizer you would need? I do purchasing as well so I know how hard it is to keep in stock. If you have enough now you cannot be assume that you will be able to keep getting it. At the hospitals we are having trouble and we are supposed to be assured of receiving. I know kids need to get back to schedule in person but not at the risk of lives.

#2

I am requesting that you delay the in-person reopening of schools until PA has 14 days of a positivity rate of below 5%. The current measures presented by LMSD will not ensure the safety of our students,

teachers, and the greater LMSD community. It is simply not possible to implement a 100% in-person reopening this fall while maintaining social distancing.

Furthermore, the current LMSD plan of reopening schools fully while offering a “virtual academy” disproportionately targets less affluent students whose families will not have the resources to allow their child to stay home and attend virtually. While LMSD is providing the virtual academy alternative, this is not an option for many families that will then need to decide between putting food on the table and keeping their family safe. The only way to ensure equity of access to virtual schooling and thus safety is to provide it universally.

By beginning the school year virtually, or at most on a hybrid schedule, LMSD can better ensure proper social distancing measures and equal access to safe public education for all students.

The COVID-19 crisis continues. Once students and staff fall ill, bring the virus home to family members, and the inevitable deaths ensue, our LMSD community will be further devastated. Please reconsider the current plan for a 100% in-person reopening of schools this fall.

Angela Desper
Concerned Parent

Thank you for your work in trying to make our schools safe in September. We are very concerned about the proposed plan to return to school in September 5 days/week without appropriate social distancing. It is quite obvious that the appropriate space does not exist in classrooms, in auditoriums, cafeterias, or buses.

We are a high risk household and have maintained social distancing since March. It seems criminal that our own school district would put our child and therefore the rest of the household at risk as cases in the area continue to increase.

The virtual offering that is proposed sounds as productive as the spring semester. Our son is a rising 6th grader at Welsh Valley and despite incredible efforts by the PVE teachers in the Spring, 11 year old children can't really learn in an asynchronous setting and a total of 4 hours of ELA and 1 hour of math per week wasn't enough and the virtual offering for the Fall also has not gotten great reviews based on what we have read. We are looking forward to attending the meeting on Wednesday to learn more.

Many neighboring districts are using a hybrid model and we firmly believe that that is the way to go. The LMSD “yellow” plan of 2 days on site with half of the student body and 3 days of virtual school and then flipping it for the other half seems like a plan that is safe and allows for both the social and academic missions of education.

As concerned parents, we hope that you will listen to us and the many others that agree with us and make a proposal that takes all needs into account

Thank you.

Lena and Steve Leff

First, I would like to thank the LMSD board and administration for your efforts to ensure a safe reopening for our kids and community. This is a colossal task and we understand the enormous

challenge, the stress and the amount of work involved. I am writing in gratitude and with utmost respect for your efforts to share some concerns as a parent.

After having read the LMSD Health and Safety Plan f 7/17/2020, I am convinced that the safest and most feasible path forward is to delay full re-opening and consider universal virtual learning for the fall semester. The plan makes evident the contradiction between what is required for safe reopening and the district's aspiration to return at full capacity. It is clear that a safe in person education environment requires half the capacity of the school to function as many of the promised safety precautions are listed to be applicable and enforceable at 50% capacity.

Public health experts have been warning us that 'a very dark period is around the corner for the US in terms of public health' in the months of fall and winter. The situation in the southern states is alarming and although Pennsylvania is currently at a better place, the trends are not going in the right direction for us to assume we will be in the green phase more than a couple of weeks at the start, if at all.

Instead of channeling resources to what is surely going to be a very disruptive fall semester with parents, staff and teachers overstressed and overwhelmed about possible signs and symptoms of risk and sickness, LMSD can use them to commit and work out the specifics of a robust plan for full virtual or hybrid model education. This seems to me the more feasible path that balances the needs of students and families for in person instruction with the safety and health of the community. I hope the board will reconsider.

Thank you,
Nilgun Uygun

We are writing to voice our concern as parents of two active LMSD students in the plan laid forth by the school district for re-opening this fall. Clearly a good deal of thought and work has gone into crafting the plan (which we have read here: [https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/lmsd/Board.nsf/files/BRMKQ252E89C/\\$file/20-07-17%20-%20Board%20Update%20-%20Exhibit%203%20-%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Plan%20-%20PDF.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/lmsd/Board.nsf/files/BRMKQ252E89C/$file/20-07-17%20-%20Board%20Update%20-%20Exhibit%203%20-%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Plan%20-%20PDF.pdf)), for which we thank the SB members. Our primary concern is with the idea that kids will be in classrooms for long durations with no requirement to wear masks as long as they are 6 feet apart.

The growing evidence suggests that the coronavirus can be spread by airborne aerosols that linger in the air, especially indoors. While we appreciate that the school board is planning to install MERV 13 filters, the details for doing so are sketchy and not clear if they will be installed in all facilities or if this step will adequately prevent inhalation of the virus in closed classrooms. How do teachers feel about being in a classroom with a class full of children not wearing masks? How is it realistic to maintain a 6-ft distance at all times, such as when students get up to leave the class.

Our family does not feel that in-person instruction is safe this fall, especially for our son who has asthma, and we will almost certainly plan to sign up for the Virtual Academy. But we have also heard from numerous other families that the academic quality of the Intermediate Unit is not as good as Lower Merion. This is a real concern for us. Wouldn't moving to an entirely online curriculum within LMSD, taught and administered by LMSD instructors, ensure the equal education of all LMSD students.

In addition, what is the District's plan for how to respond to any outbreaks in the schools mid-semester? Will individual classrooms only self-quarantine? Will an entire school close for in-person instruction and move online? What will the threshold be? If the experiences of other countries is any indication,

opening schools for in-person attendance is highly likely to add to community spread of the disease. I can imagine that if such an outbreak occurs, and unfortunately it seems likely it will, the district will rush to contain it and close facilities. What then will be the benefit of having some students in the LM Virtual Academy and others participating in online instruction through their home school? Won't it be less of a burden on the schools, their staff, and families to have the same method of instruction in place for the whole term?

And lastly, it's curious that the School Board meeting to discuss this agenda item is occurring virtually and not in-person. Perhaps you could afford the teachers and students in the district the same precautions and safeguards you are practicing yourselves by holding classes virtually. If it's safe enough for our kids to hold in-person classes, why aren't you meeting in-person yourselves?

In closing, it does not seem that decreasing community spread of Covid-19 is a priority in the plan LMSD is putting forward. As parents but also as residents in the Lower Merion community, this is highly distressing.

Sincerely,
Michael Kerns & Kimberly Glyder

As a concerned parent, I'm writing to express my confusion over the District's plan to fully reopen schools in September. The United States has the highest rates of infection of any nation in the world and Montgomery County has had a 3.4% increase in cases from just last week. While Montgomery County shows vast improvement as compared to other regions in the country, it seems premature to reopen schools and risk losing the ground we've gained when there still remain so many unknowns about this virus. It is especially concerning that the LM School District is prepared to fully open schools given neighboring districts are adopting the hybrid models based on the same data, recommendations and guidelines.

I have rising 3rd and 4th graders. With prompting they are able to maintain correct mask positioning, but it does become uncomfortable for any length of time for them. In addition to the many requirements we place upon teachers should they spend precious minutes in the day prompting children to keep their masks on at all times to the detriment of learning? I believe a hybrid model will allow children the necessary in person instruction they require, while also mitigating our expectations of young learners to wear masks for 6 hours a day, 5 days a week minus a few mask breaks as noted in the emails from Superintendent Copeland.

While a recent commentary (see below for citation) in the journal *Pediatrics* suggests COVID-19 transmissions rates between children and adults is infrequent the article is clear that physical distancing is necessary. The District plan is unambiguous that 6 ft physical distancing is not plausible in classrooms, lunchrooms, etc. The adverse costs of virtual learning are clear. My older children has special needs and was poorly serviced March - June as teachers struggled to adapt to the Zoom platform. We've lost countless hours of social practice and my child has experienced regressions in many of his skills. It is my belief that opening schools prematurely only to potentially close them and move to total virtual learning will yield irreparable damage to our young learners and most particularly our special education population.

I ask that the District reconsider its plan to open schools 5 days per week and rather, adopt a hybrid model at this time.

Sincerely,
 Francesca Garcia

After reviewing the school district's Health and Safety Plan, our family is at odds as to how the district will proceed in the likely event of a COVID-19 positive within school grounds (in our case, Cynwyd Elementary and Bala Cynwyd MS). Planning and training of substitute staff will be necessary. One positive case within a classroom must lead to a shutdown of that classroom for a period no less than 14 days. In the meantime, how are students potentially exposed expected to continue with their academic curriculum? There is no mention of the use of online platforms to continue instruction during a classroom quarantine.

Even if students wear face masks, there is no written policy as to how the staff will treat student-to-student situations where social distancing practices are not in effect (students removing masks or partially removing masks, for instance).

It is also of grave concern that document clearly acknowledges on several parts that social distancing under green phase operations will not be possible as a result of the large number of students attending each school.

Just having billboards and signage throughout the school will be insufficient, in my opinion. Continuous monitoring of student behavior will be essential to contain the virus entry into the school hallways and even then it may still not be enough, although we pray it does.

Miguel Vescovacci

We are the parents of 3 Lower Merion School District students at Harriton High School (2 rising freshmen and a rising Junior) and am writing to provide a parent perspective on the proposed return-to-school models I have heard about and/or pieced together from Dr Copeland's recent communications, with the caveat that we were unable to find a comprehensive description of the various proposals anywhere on the district website.

- We understand one proposal under discussion is to reopen the schools for 5 days of in-person instruction at full capacity (100% of students) during the GREEN Phase. As clinical researchers and scientists engaged in Covid-19 research we have significant concerns about this model as it would not be possible for children and the staff/teachers to maintain social distancing and hygiene practices which are still necessary and recommended by the PA Health Department.

- The safest way to reopen schools is a hybrid model of 2 full days of half the students body, deep cleaning mid week, and then 2 full days of the second half of the student body. We believe this model provides the benefit of some in-person instruction and interaction with peers and teachers and to do so in a safe manner and is the model that should be implemented during both the YELLOW and GREEN phase.

- Under any hybrid model, we would like to understand in more detail (than the one liner provided on the Reopening FAQ) what steps the school district has taken to provide *rigorous instruction with access to live online lessons on the 3 days our children would be at home*. We would like reassurance that significant steps have been taken (and what those are) to improve on the instruction that was provided in March-June.

- We would also like to know who has been advising you on the plans from a public health and medical perspective? Some of the nation's experts on COVID19 and its clinical management live in the school district, as do some of the PA Health Department clinicians involved in statewide COVID19 response planning and risk management. We sincerely hope you have tapped into their expertise as you have developed these plans.

- Finally, despite the various communications by Dr Copeland, which I appreciate, I feel frustrated at the way the planning for next school year has been communicated to the LM community. As indicated above I was unable to find online a single document outlining the proposed plans and who has been involved in their development; any communications requesting for parent / expert input/comment on the proposals; or communication of the School Board meetings where these proposals are discussed.

We have been great advocates of LMSD and the high quality education and supportive learning environment it has provided to our kids so far. We both sincerely hope that the School Board can institute the safest, most sustainable model for its students and teachers/staff alike.

Thank you for considering our comments,

Dr Erika De Boever, DDS MPH PhD

Dr Howard Kallender, PhD

Additional Comment: Further to my earlier email about the School Reopening Proposals, I am wondering if any thought has been given to using the LMVA platform on the days that children wouldn't be able to go into school for in person instruction under a hybrid model? It seems this would have the advantage of providing a single virtual/online teaching solution to all students and it would guarantee all students are provided the same curriculum.

I'm a parent of a soon-to-be 2nd grader at Penn Wynne Elementary School.

I have several concerns about the new school year Health and Safety plan.

1) I searched on the LMSD website and its COVID related information, but the plan, which was released on Friday, is nowhere to be found. Individual parents are passing it around, which is problematic if it is to be voted on tonight. Again, it's tough to know what's happening. Transparency is lacking at the moment.

2) While it's good to have an option that involves full reopening, I do not think it's prudent or safe to start with it. Instead, why not start with the hybrid plan? covid-19 is extremely contagious. It will only be a matter of time an event (eg teacher gets sick; child gets sick, etc.) occurs to cause a change of plans from 5 day, in-person instruction. Then, parents will need to scramble to make contingency plans. Isn't it more fair to give them an opportunity to make those plans now instead of scrambling 3 weeks into the start of the school year?

3) Another concern with starting off with the in-person 5 day a week plan is - at least at Penn Wynn Elementary - hoping for 50% occupancy to ensure social distancing is magical thinking. It is the belief 50% of students will disenroll or sign-up for virtual learning? If so, where does that assumption come from? I believe a precondition for any instruction scenario is that social distancing can be maintained. Otherwise, even though we'd all love to go back to normal, it just seems like a plan where

covid doesn't exist, and not in line with the social distancing guidelines. Again, why not plan for the hybrid model and if 50% occupancy occurs, that option gets "turned on"?

Thanks, and I know these are hard decisions. I appreciate your efforts in these unprecedented times.

Joseph MacNeal
Ardmore PA 19003

Thank you for funding some screening for new school bus parking at Welsh Valley Middle School during tonight's Board meeting. Unfortunately, to effectively screen the entirety of the bus parking area, a more extensive plan is needed.

LMSD Operations has kindly shared with me the potential landscape plan. Funding the "Alternate 2" option of this plan in addition to the base plan that you approve tonight would screen the parking lot year-round.

The "Alternate 2" portion of the plan consists of trees that could be planted along Hagys Ford Road that would block the angled view of the lot, particularly in winter months. (The base plan alone will only screen a small area at the back of the buses.)

We feel that the parking at WVMS should be screened on par with high school bus parking facilities in the Township. Buses are not visible to nearby residents at either Harriton or Lower Merion due to heavy screening or thoughtful placement and design. Thank you for considering providing the same for Welsh Valley by funding additional plantings which will also serve to enhance District property.

Michelle Detwiler
Penn Valley Civic Association, president

Regarding the Health and Safety Plan

([https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/lmsd/Board.nsf/files/BRMKQ252E89C/\\$file/20-07-17%20-%20Board%20Update%20-%20Exhibit%203%20-%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Plan%20-%20PDF.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/lmsd/Board.nsf/files/BRMKQ252E89C/$file/20-07-17%20-%20Board%20Update%20-%20Exhibit%203%20-%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Plan%20-%20PDF.pdf)),

specifically the list of members assigned to the Pandemic Coordinator/Team.

The template includes this guidance:

"LEAs are highly encouraged to make extra effort to engage representatives from every stakeholder group (i.e., administrators, teachers, support staff, students, families, community health official or other partners), with a special focus on ensuring that the voices of underrepresented and historically marginalized stakeholder groups are prioritized."

The LMSD team doesn't even include a Home and School Association rep or two?

Seems like you walked right into that one! (palm to forehead)

Please develop a new habit/filter, and apply it to EVERY meeting topic, from land development to instructional support:

"WHO ELSE NEEDS TO KNOW - and how are we ensuring communication? Not just telling, but also listening?"

You are missing some key stakeholders by not always asking these questions, and it hurts your reputation.

FWIW, (For what it's worth)

Mo Gillen

I am writing regarding my continued concerns about racism in LMSD, sparked by the racist social media posts by current students. With traumatic accounts heard directly from LMSD current and recent students at the student-organized Town Hall on July 16, 2020, it is clear that racism continues to have an adverse impact on our children and families.

On June 3, 2020, I wrote to the Board, on behalf of numerous Lower Merion community members, to submit both short and long-term requests to combat racism within LMSD. That letter was received and read aloud during your regular Board meeting on June 8, 2020, but no action was taken other than the formation of an AdHoc Committee that consists solely of Board members, and has yet to hold a meeting with the community.

On June 22, 2020 I wrote to you again to request an increased contract award for Dr. Tara Doaty, so that K-12 anti-racism training could take place in 2020-21 across the district. My proposal was rejected by the Board.

Today, I write once again because I see no mention of anti-racism on your agenda for this evening's regular Board meeting. **I ask that the Board maintain anti-racism efforts as a standing agenda item for all regular and special Board meetings going forward.**

Moreover, I ask that the Board immediately release its planned schedule for AdHoc Committee meetings with the community over the summer. It is apparent to me that the community remains interested in attacking the issue of racism, as we have already formed committees in the following areas to work alongside the AdHoc Committee this summer to develop appropriate short and mid-term changes that LMSD can implement right away. The community-led movement is working on anti-racism recommendations and research in the following areas:

- Curriculum
- Internal Accountability and Consistency in LMSD
- Anti-Racism Training
- Diversity Hiring
- Student Code of Conduct & Discipline for Hate Speech

Lastly, I ask that even though Sup. Copeland mentioned an equity audit is planned over the 2020-21 school year, that the Board not delay in taking at a bare minimum, the follow steps:

- allocating funds toward changes that LMSD needs to make for its anti-racism efforts; and
- listening the expertise and voices of a variety of community members who are well-credentialed and have extensive experience with the above-mentioned subject areas.

My expectation is that the Board will move swiftly to fulfill its duty to ensure that LMSD upholds its stated goals of creating a safe space for all students, dismantling white supremacy, and protecting the community of color from further harm. Nearby school districts are already taking action to address racism under similar circumstances.

Please give the community the chance to access the AdHoc Committee so that this critical work can continue over the summer without unnecessary delay.

Sincerely,

Andrea Gosfield, Esq.

I am writing to voice my opinion in favor of opening the schools 5 days a week. The children need to be in school and the mental risk of them not being there far outweighs the 1 in 100,000 chance that one

will have to go to the hospital. It needs to happen and if it doesn't you need to rebate our taxes So that we can send them somewhere that takes their education seriously.

Preston Moritz

I have a sixth grader and an 11 grader. I am so nervous to send both to school. My son just had to be tested today because he came into contact with a boy playing a soccer game. The nurse Said all the younger kids are testing positive . These same kids are waiting for results 7-10 business days. These same kids will be in your school waiting test results all while not being able to social distance. Also, what are you doing with the kids coming into the district illegally? Are you still letting them come into our district too and possible having the virus? Maybe it's a good time to crack down on those kids too.

Meredith Kades

I am writing to you not only as a concerned member of the community and parent of a rising 5th grader and 2nd grader at Cynwyd Elementary, but also as a pediatrician who has been very involved from the start of the COVID pandemic.

I have grave concerns with the reopening plan proposed by the district, not only for the health and safety of my children, but also their caretakers, teachers, school support staff, and other members of our community for whom a COVID infection could prove debilitating or deadly. Unfortunately, as with any new illness, we are continually learning what effects this virus has on the human population and how to best mitigate our risk individually and as a community. Just this week in fact, a study of over 60,000 patients, showed that transmissibility of COVID in children age 10 and older is equivalent to the transmissibility we see in adults. This is new information and contrary to what was thought just 1 week ago where it appeared COVID was less easily transmitted among children. I am concerned that the board's plan appears to be ill-informed, too quick to implement, unrealistic to achieve, and not based on scientific evidence. It also puts us all at a significantly higher risk than is appropriate. Instead of pressing ahead we should tread lightly and err on the side of caution.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, The Infectious Disease Society of America, The HIV Medicine Association, and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia all call for an evidence-based approach to the re-opening of schools. This is not being appropriately implemented. For example, a major part of the current board plan calls for 3-foot distancing of masked students, should more than 50% of the student population elect to return to in-person school while PA is in the green zone. This 3-foot measurement has no basis in science whatsoever and is a factitious number. In fact, there are no other environments where 3-foot distancing is recommended and evidence-based literature suggests a MINIMUM of 6-foot distancing of masked people to decrease transmission of respiratory droplets. It is very clear that should the school be fully populated, that it would be impossible to guarantee 6-foot distancing at all times as there is not enough physical space in classrooms to accommodate both students and distance.

Additionally, these organizations also recommend rigorous testing and contact tracing availability to support an in-person return. As a pediatrician in the community, I can assure you that currently we do not have either of these available at the quantity nor quality

required. Due to the inadequacy of supplies and appointments, COVID tests can often take up to 7 days to get results, and negative tests can have up to a 30% false negative rate, thus incorrectly reassuring the community that a child is negative and can return to school. As a result, this can potentially cause an outbreak widespread quarantine. Furthermore, I think it is concerning that the school is willing to trust parents' self-reporting of symptoms and that they will not send their kids to school sick. Very often in my office, I see children who have fever or other symptoms, get a dose of acetaminophen or ibuprofen prior to school, are brought to school, only to be sent home at lunchtime with returning symptoms as the medication wears off. While in a normal setting, this is horrible enough, in the setting of COVID this can prove to be deadly should that child infect another who goes on to infect a higher risk adult. It also exposes other children who may or may not develop serious disease, and causes quarantine of the entire classroom and extensive missed time from work for parents.

Removing my pediatrician hat, I also have concerns regarding the Virtual Academy. I feel that we as parents are being forced to make a premature decision without enough information as to whether to pull our kids out of their home school and opt for the all-virtual option. What will the virtual day look like CONCRETELY for different grade levels? Will there be synchronous learning and if so, how much and by whom? What will our home-school's day look like if we enter the red zone and our home school starts teaching 100% virtually. Will they have synchronous learning and how much? Will we be able to leave the Virtual Academy midsemester if the home school goes all virtual and is running a superior program? Aside from the Virtual Academy, if we opt to place our children in a Virtual Charter School will they be guaranteed spots back into their home school once the COVID pandemic is over even if their home school is considered "closed to enrollment/full"?

I appreciate your time and consideration with my concerns. I have attached a copy of the statements from the Infectious Disease Society, as well as CHOP's official statement regarding the reopening of schools for your review.

--Lori Schwartz-Tatar, MD

I encourage you to look at what has happened in cities that have opened up too quickly. Coronavirus has spread like wildfire, many have died, and we don't know the long term effects of this virus. Learning from other's mistakes and not allowing yourself to make the same ones, makes you thoughtful and wise. These are characteristics I hope my own children develop both in school and outside of school. I hope that you are able to set this example for all of the children in the LMSD. In one of the best school districts in our nation, our online presence should be equally as strong and should be setting an example for the rest of the country.

Opening schools full time at 100% capacity presents many more problems than solutions. I believe that you are making a grave mistake, both literally and figuratively, by opening schools in this way. It puts our community at great risk and exposes LMSD to liability unlike anything it has ever seen before. It's extremely difficult to believe that anyone at LMSD is fully behind the idea of reopening, since tonight's meeting and vote will be held virtually.

We can figure out ways to mitigate educational loss, but how are you planning to mitigate the loss of life that will happen and the psychological damage you will be creating? Do you have resources to address these matters?

I have two children in the LMSD system, one is twice exceptional with severe ADHD (and has a GIEP & a 504) and the other is a reluctant reader whose lack of foundational skills has created this problem (and distance learning has further pronounced)—and though I see great benefit to being in school in person, the risks far outweigh the benefits as the numbers of infected with coronavirus are on the rise.

I think we are all in agreement that distance learning was unsuccessful from March through June, but opening schools is not the proper corrective measure. Instead of focusing on how to reopen schools in-person, your efforts would be better directed toward figuring out how to make distance learning more effective and accessible to all. Perhaps virtual school will only need to be in place until after Thanksgiving when we can all safely return to in-person school. We all know it's a reality that if schools open, they will all likely close within one month. What is your plan then?

What if you implemented a program like Edmentum (my son is currently using this as his summer math bridge program) to teach the students and not rely on worksheets and parents to teach lessons? What if teachers focused on literature circles and read alouds to bring students together? Or what if teachers focused on just the social/emotional aspect of teaching and learning? What if you had teachers and school staff in charge of a small group of kids (no larger than nine) and held "school" outside once a week regardless of weather? What if you had wall-less classrooms for this or took the kids on creek walks or brought the students outside and into nature? We have so many township trails and parks that are closed and unused right now? What if we had the ability to think outside the box and outside the confines of the classroom to solve this problem? We are trying to teach our kids to do this, so why not model this for them? Though everyone tried their hardest at the end of last year, it was ultimately a failure, but no one is to blame. Showing our children that failure doesn't mean defaulting to an option that was problematic before and is an opportunity to try something new and different, is a skill they should be learning in school. This is the perfect opportunity for everyone to learn from this failure. After all, we learn most from our mistakes. There are so many possibilities that aren't being considered.

If you are willing to break the government's rules regarding coronavirus safety to reopen schools, why aren't you be willing to break the traditional public school rules?

We don't know enough about this virus to put ourselves at this kind of risk. Yes, many say, "It's just a virus," but let's put it out there that chickenpox is also a virus that lays dormant in your body and can show up as shingles later in life, Herpes is a virus that stays in your body forever and only physically reappears when under stress, HIV is a virus that compromises your immune system for life.

Please read and consider the questions below. I urge you to open your minds and make solid decisions for people of all ages in our community.

Best,
Meredith Lissack
PVE

Questions for School Openings (not my own, but found online): * *list has been shared with the Board of School Directors and appears on pages 55 & 56 of this document.*

I am asking you to postpone the board vote tonight until your opening plan explains the following:

What is the curriculum followed by the intermediary unit and how does it compare to the outcomes we usually see in the LM schools.

What measures will you put in place to ensure kids who've been exposed are not coming to school? The wait time for Covid test results is still 5 days or more. Working Parents are going to be hard put to keep kids at home of their own good will without a contact tracing program in place.

Why is the district considering opening in green without the proper distancing. All evidence points to increasing infections in LM.

Further, responding to the published plan, "Trying to" change filtration systems, or maintain social distancing in full classrooms is not good enough for one of the premier districts in the country.

I look forward to your candid answers at tonight's meeting.

In appreciation of the thought and work you have put into this already,

Hadass Sheffer,
Parent of two LMSD students

Thank you for your work on the difficult problem of reopening the schools. I appreciate the work that went into the Health and Safety Plan, but I am writing to oppose a full re-opening that does not provide the six feet of distancing recommended by Montgomery County and the Pennsylvania DOH. The Health and Safety Plan states on pg. 11 that the proper six feet will not be possible unless schools are less than 50 percent capacity, which is highly unlikely. Meanwhile, the Virtual Academy option is not satisfactory as an alternative for a host of reasons, including the fact that it is not run by the district and its teachers. Given the upward trend of cases not only nationwide but in the region, and the corresponding shift away from full re-opening plans among many districts, I support a move either to a hybrid model or, if necessary, an all-online model with more robust participation from LM teachers. I understand and appreciate that these options also have big drawbacks, but the health and safety of children, families, and staff must be our top priority.

Thank you,
Eve Weiss (high school parent)
Merion Station, PA 19066

As a current parent and former virologist, I write this letter as an express of concern of LMSD's plan for full school re-opening this September. This is a counter-science or counter-logic approach, given that fewer cases were confirmed in Montgomery County at the time of school shut down back in March. As rates now continue to *increase* statewide and nationally, how do we believe large group gatherings, with school being inclusive of bus/class-rooms/eating/bathrooms/extra-curriculars are now deemed safer? It would seem the decision to re-open is without proper considering for the safety, health and well-being of the students, teachers and by extension, the entire school network (families, school operations staff, etc). Per Governor Wolf's guidance on "learning more about how to do that [reopen schools] safely" (Link has been shared with Board of School Directors) I haven't seen any evidence we have the ability to control spread in one of the most non-compliant populations being children. It is appreciated that the state currently sits in "green", but despite this, the Governor still calls for the possibility of "considering piloting approaches on a smaller scale to inform broader implementation in the fall." According to my sources within the LMSD, there have been no such piloting procedures in place -- how can we therefore be

assured *a priori* we aren't putting ourselves at tremendous risk? The health and safety of my children (and yours) certainly shouldn't reside on the contrary in a wait-and-see approach.

What is most difficult is trying to understand what would motivate the school board to push for a full re-opening. What is your list of priorities? In person instruction being most-effective? As a parent with two children in the school system, I would agree that is a high priority for us, but does not supersede health and safety. Are you prioritizing economic impact to families? If so, have you asked all families to weigh in? Again, this does not supersede health and safety.

I also run counter to the "green phase" reopening plan that simply imposes "steps to protect children and staff at high risk". Does this include secondary high risk? I have a spouse with severe asthma. She doesn't go to school, but our children will be. Children are proven to be highly infectious carriers (mostly asymptomatic), but transmit to adults. Is my family now considered high risk? What about the overlap with flu season? What do we do when one child in a class is absent due to illness? We'll have no idea if this is COVID risk or flu risk until well after exposure to rest of the class has already occurred due to COVID's delay in symptom onset.

From the point of view of a concerned parent, this decision to return to in-person classrooms is rushed and illogical. Help us understand the clear counterarguments of why our school district is zagging when we have seen other school districts moving cautiously with a hybrid model. As of today, there are no health and safety plans for LM submitted to the Governor's office.

Because without these counterarguments and without confidence in the ability to feasibly have children wear masks and maintain social distancing on playgrounds and on buses and in classrooms, and still expect in-person learning to be efficient, while *increasing the risk of COVID for everyone in LM*, the action to proceed with in-person schooling seems like a gamble. Lower Merion doesn't gamble. We get it right. I ask you to get this right.

Sincerely,

John Sears, PhD, MBA

Please see attached letter representing a petition to postpone tonight's vote on the LMSD Health and Safety Plan, **written on behalf of concerned parents** in the Lower Merion School District, **and signed by over 200 (and counting) such individuals** at time of this email.

Given the number of parents whose concerns are represented by this petition, **we respectfully implore you to read this letter and petition during the commentary section of the meeting**. Although we understand from the meeting agenda that "**every consideration will be given to read the comments but can not be guaranteed**", we believe these comments deserve to be heard given the volume of constituents they represent.

Carrie Stricker

Good evening. I am strongly voicing my option again on behalf of my husband and friends with specials need children. As obviously this is a controversies and political issue. But, I STRESS lmsd needs to open in the fall with full face to face. Parents got many chances to voice their opinion via the blackboard and covid link. There are parents who can afford a tutor or a babysitter or their children get do group learning or their child can do virtual. But there are many parents who don't have that luxury or their child can't do group outside of school. I understand some may not feel comfortable sending them to school and that is their right to have their child learn another way. But, I stress no parents have the right to tell the sd to not reopen bc they don't want their child to go back. The ones who do def deserve the opportunity to send them back!! Obviously lmsd is not going to provide a tutor. What about the children who have regressed or just maintained from no school since March?! Basically saying it's not my child so I don't care is wrong. There are children who need in person 5 days a week to get maximum learning. And for parents to deny the other children from getting a free public education from in person is NOT

RIGHT. So please do not consider not reopening in the fall. But, rather hold onto to your decision with reopening fully!!

Stacey Walinsky

What, if any, academic accommodations/assistance do you envision given the likely high rates of absenteeism that will occur if students strictly follow the guidelines regarding staying home if viral symptoms like cough, fever, etc.?

Cynthia Jacobstein, Narberth, PA 19072

As a parent of a Lower Merion School District student, and a member of the community, I am deeply concerned that your proposed plan for re-opening acknowledges that if capacity rises about 50%, you will not be able to ensure social distancing and other necessary safety precautions. In addition, you are voting on this plan without community input. This is a tough decision during unprecedented times, I get that. It is also a decision that has implications for the health and safety of our entire community.

If the plan doesn't work safely if more than 50% of the student body returns to school, you have not yet found a plan that will work.

There are many inadequately answered questions about this plan, and the community deserves answers before a vote.

Do better. Lives are on the line.

Respectfully,

Alexandra O'Neill

I encourage you to look at what has happened in cities that have opened up too quickly. Coronavirus has spread like wildfire, many have died, and we don't know the long-term effects of this virus. Learning from other's mistakes and not allowing yourself to make the same ones, makes you thoughtful and wise. These are characteristics I hope my own children develop both in school and outside of school. I hope that you are able to set this example for all of the children in the LMSD. In one of the best school districts in our nation, our online presence should be equally as strong and should be setting an example for the rest of the country.

Opening schools full time at 100% capacity presents many more problems than solutions. I believe that you are making a grave mistake, both literally and figuratively, by opening schools in this way. It puts our community at great risk and exposes LMSD to liability unlike anything it has ever seen before. It's extremely difficult to believe that anyone at LMSD is fully behind the idea of reopening, since tonight's meeting and vote will be held virtually.

We can figure out ways to mitigate educational loss, but how are you planning to mitigate the loss of life that will happen and the psychological damage you will be creating? Do you have resources to address these matters?

I have one child in the LMSD system and one in preschool. My daughter, a rising 3rd grader, struggles with self-confidence in her learning and she learns best from teachers. While my daughter's teacher was wonderful the program from the spring furthered my daughter's self doubt. She does not do well with asynchronous learning. Furthermore, the current LMSD plan of reopening schools fully while offering a "virtual academy" disproportionately targets less affluent students whose families will not

have the resources to allow their child to stay home and attend virtually. While LMSD is providing the virtual academy alternative, this is not an option for many families that will then need to decide between putting food on the table and keeping their family safe. The only way to ensure equity of access to virtual schooling and thus safety is to provide it universally. I would love to my daughter to attend school daily as there is a great benefit educationally, the risks far outweigh the benefits as the numbers of infected with coronavirus are on the rise.

I think we are all in agreement that distance learning was unsuccessful from March through June, but opening schools at full capacity is not the proper corrective measure. Instead of focusing on how to reopen schools in-person, your efforts would be better directed toward figuring out how to make distance learning more effective and accessible to all. Perhaps virtual school will only need to be in place until after Thanksgiving when we can all safely return to in-person school. We all know it's a reality that if schools open, they will all likely close within one month. What is your plan then?

Distance education must be taught by the LMSD teachers at the schools where our children currently attend. These teachers have a vested interest in getting to know, love, and teach our children. Distance learning cannot be watching videos and doing worksheets. There is no benefit there. What if teachers focused on literature circles and read alouds to bring students together? Or what if teachers focused on just the social/emotional aspect of teaching and learning? What if you had teachers and school staff in charge of a small group of kids (no larger than nine) and held "school" outside once a week regardless of weather? What if you had wall-less classrooms for this or took the kids on creek walks or brought the students outside and into nature? We have so many township trails and parks that are closed and unused right now? What if we had the ability to think outside the box and outside the confines of the classroom to solve this problem? We are trying to teach our kids to do this, so why not model this for them? Though everyone tried their hardest at the end of last year, it was ultimately a failure, but no one is to blame. Showing our children that failure doesn't mean defaulting to an option that was problematic before and is an opportunity to try something new and different, is a skill they should be learning in school. This is the perfect opportunity for everyone to learn from this failure. After all, we learn most from our mistakes. There are so many solutions that aren't being considered.

If you are willing to break the government's rules regarding coronavirus safety to reopen schools, why aren't you be willing to break the traditional public school rules?

We don't know enough about this virus to put ourselves at this kind of risk. Yes, many say, "It's just a virus," but let's put it out there that chickenpox is also a virus that lays dormant in your body and can show up as shingles later in life, Herpes is a virus that stays in your body forever and only physically reappears when under stress, HIV is a virus that compromises your immune system for life. Please read and consider the questions below. I urge you to open your minds and make solid decisions for people of all ages in our community.

Sincerely,

Shari Prensky & Ben Prensky
Parents of a rising 3rd grader

Like most parents I talk with, I do not want school to open at full capacity without a way for kids to maintain social distance throughout the day.

I'm urging the Board to START school with a HYBRID model so kids can maintain distance at school. I'm also urging the Board to require a ROBUST plan for virtual learning, including teacher training, a new virtual platform if needed, and a focus on SYNCHRONOUS virtual instruction (which my kids received none of last school year).

Our kids' safety and the safety of all faculty needs to be first and foremost.

-Danielle Brooks

=====

Below are my comments for the Board meeting today:

- 1) The Health and Safety plan released by the district is excellent and comprehensive, following all guidelines I have read so far in peer-reviewed medical journals and public health guidelines.
- 2) Children with special needs, including my own student, suffered tremendously during the last school shut down and hybrid learning in the yellow phase will further harm them. Flipping from online to in person learning every week is disruptive and destabilizing for children with autism who can decompensate and regress with that massive change every week. These students should be in school full-time in person, even during the yellow phase.
- 3) Re-opening plans should be based on recommendations of public health experts and physicians, not based on fear. As a physician, I review scientific literature to help me make decisions about my children's education during the pandemic. Major medical organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, have released reports stating unequivocally that children should be in school, in person, this fall. Those reports also clearly state that children with special needs should be given top priority for in person learning even when other children cannot be physically in school because of social distancing requirements. An article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association last month states, "School systems should make on-site education a high priority for youth who experience barriers to remote learning, students who receive special education services or nutritional support at school, and younger children (for whom online learning may be particularly challenging)." Link has been shared with Board of School Directors

The American Academy of Pediatrics report says the same thing.

LMSD should commit to providing full-time, in person learning for children with special needs this upcoming academic year, which is what is advised by medical experts. The online education provided last spring was completely inadequate for these children and runs the risk of violating the Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act if repeated. The district must ensure that these children, who are our most vulnerable, are provided with full access to a free and appropriate public education, which online learning is not.

Addendum to original email:

As an addendum to my prior comment, I also would like to share with the Board this recent report from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, which is a reputable national organization that has studied the evidence around school re-opening. They state unequivocally that schools should open for full-time, in person instruction, highlighting children with special needs and those in K-5 for this in person access. Link has been shared with Board.

Thank you,
Dr. Sahota
Penn Valley

I registered my daughter Ava Rose Mazzone, on Friday, July 17th, in Lower Merion's Virtual Academy. I no longer wish to do so after reading the parent/teacher questions regarding LMVA/MCIU, submitted in google docs with regard to reopening our schools amid a global pandemic and rising Covid-19 cases in our state.

Please let me know how to recant the registration I submitted. My daughter's safety comes first, but I do not want it at the cost of her education as she starts high school this year at Harriton. It is my sincere hope that you will not put our kids, teachers and support staff members, parents and community members at an increased risk of contracting the Covid-19 virus.

Regards,
Lisa Bobyock, MPA

My name is Andrew Hill and I live in Narberth PA. My two oldest children are a rising junior and freshman at LMHS.

Reading the reopening plan pdf, it becomes clear that the green plan knowing fails to meet state health department and existing CDC social distancing guidelines. While I recognize that school attendance is a challenging issue with work and childcare requirements, I am not sure that is the board's primary responsibility or charter. This board should be ensuring that any school plans fully meet safety criteria. I would like the board to explain how it is possibly responsible to institute any plan which contravenes best available health recommendations.

This is an official objection as per the Sunshine Act.

My name is Joseph Abramson and I am unable to participate as a resident in watching the meeting tonight. When I try to access the link, I am told the meeting is full. As per the law, every meeting must be available to the public. Therefore, this meeting must be adjourned or an alternative mode of communication be available.

Thank you,
Joseph Abramson
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

The zoom session reached capacity at 300 callers. Hard to believe that LMSD didn't foresee that more than 300 people (in a district this size) might be interested in hearing about such an important issue. Unbelievable.

Robert Pace

I am not sure I understand how a meeting like this could have a limit of 300 people. I signed in 5 minutes before the start time and cannot join. Please consider adding a second link so that the hundreds of parents who would like to join can do so.

Cynthia Jacobstein
Narberth, PA 19072

I hope you are all well and safe.

The fact that the meeting tonight will be held via Zoom because it is unsafe for us all to gather together underscores the concerns and shortcomings of the proposed Health & Safety Plan. Should more than 50% of students elect to return to school buildings in the "Green" phase, the lack of adequate distances inside the school facilities for teachers, staff and students mandates that the plan be rejected.

Because you will not know today how many students will be returning to the school buildings for the 2020-2021 school year, I do not know how you can adopt such a plan, as it is tantamount to sentencing our teachers, staff and students to exposure to unsafe conditions.

With over 6 weeks until the start of the school year there is still time to design a solution that will not risk the safety of so many while satisfying so few. I encourage you to think creatively and engage with the members of the community who want to have a workable solution to this very challenging problem. I encourage you to (1) Poll the community and (2) consider a model such as the one proposed here: Link has been shared with the Board.

Thank you.

Danielle Schweiloch

Narberth, PA 19072

Parent to children in Merion and BCMS

It is very disappointing that the Lower Merion Public School System Board meetings can't afford to open your virtual meetings to everyone who needs to attend them.

The limitations of Zoom to 300 people is seriously concerning. You're essentially blocking out anyone who isn't able to press their keys fast enough to join the meeting when it starts.

This is what we call intentional disenfranchisement. You know this is a problem, but choose to do nothing about it. And it's shameful given that this school system is supposed to be one of the best in the US.

Fix your technology and allow everyone who wants and needs to 'attend' your supposed open-to-the-public school board meetings can attend.

Thank you.

Reggie Murphy

The meeting tonight seems to be capped at 300 attendees, and I am unable to attend. I would love to sit in and learn more about this coming school year. My daughter will be entering 2nd grade at Merion Elementary.

If by chance you can not expand to more than 300 people - I would greatly appreciate it if a link to the recording of the meeting be posted this week.

Thank you so much for all you are doing. This is an incredibly hard time, and I can't imagine all of the work going in behind the scenes... thank you!

Best,

Jessica Weissman
Merion Station PA 19066

Many people have given up trying to get in.

Thank you for not acting on the school reopening

Adrian Seltzer
Wynnewood, PA 19096

I wanted to attend the meeting tonight, however I am not allowed in due to the 300 person cap on the meeting. As this is a very important decision where parents and staff are extremely invested it is disheartening you are not live streaming it on a service like Youtube, so all who want to attend can. Please consider this for the next meeting around school reopening.

Sincerely,
Danielle Koch

The plan to bring back 100% of the student population full-time does not allow students to maintain social distancing in classrooms, on buses, or while having meals when masks are off. Schools don't exist in a vacuum and the best way to reopen schools safely is when our community has little to no outbreak. Opening while in the yellow phase is only possible with multiple protective layers in place. All indicators are that there will be an increase in cases here, as we are seeing this elsewhere. The consequences of reopening at full capacity could be devastating to our community. The only reasonable decision to be made right now is whether to open schools at all, with the choice being a 50% capacity, hybrid week with part time remote learning vs full time remote learning for all students. Of course this is not ideal, but erring on the side of the safety of children and families is always a wise decision.

Sincerely,
Paula Gilbert
Wynnewood

Had anyone considered how this will disproportionately effect black students?
-Alexis Haynes, Student at LM.

I am trying to connect to the board meeting and I cannot, because the meeting has reached the maximum number of participants (300). Is there an alternative meeting Id I could use to connect?
Thank you!

Regards,
Nancy Polychronopoulou

Hi! Thank you for trying to make the school year happen for all as safely as possible. If you could please clarify something for me? Copland cancelled the vote for this evening on the Health and safety plan (there was a petition asking the board to postpone the vote) Yet when Megan Shaffer was explaining the plan Copland said they would still have to turn it into the state because they have many to review and he doesn't want any lag time. I agree with this (do not want lag time) but don't understand what the vote was for then if the plan is still being submitted as is. I just don't understand how it works and hoping you can explain it to me.
Thanks,

Michele Vessal

We have a kindergartener that we are considering for Gladwyne Elementary.
 Can we please be included in the presentation related to hybrid learning with Principal Ellers?
 Thank you, -Scott Hoeflich, Villanova, 19085

Schools MUST remain closed until we are safe from the spread of coronavirus disease 2019.
 The proposals and recommendations put forth thus far are unrealistic and unsafe. Children are NOT robots who will stay 6 feet apart, keep masks on, wash hands without oversight (think the girls' and boys' rooms), sit facing forwards at all times etc etc etc. However, students WILL touch each other, cough and sneeze (outside of their mask), pick their nose and not wash their hands, go to the bathroom and not wash their hands, be up and around their classmates (not 6 feet apart) etc etc etc.
 There WILL be a spread of this disease that will be traced back to a student or staff member if schools are open before COVID-19 is under control and it is not under control.

Please read this article:

No engagement = No learning

(Link has been shared with the Board)

Thank you for your thoughtful reading of my comments and the above article.

Sincerely,

Alison Moyer

Wynnewood

I am presuming you have been made aware of this portion of the presentation from our immediate neighbor Haverford Township's school board meeting with Dr. Patrick J. Brennan, Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice President of the University of Pennsylvania Health System. Even though they are another county, we share a border, I wanted to forward it along for consideration. He addresses points that are relevant for any district under the PDE.
 (Link has been shared with the Board)

Thank you for taking parental concerns into consideration and further exploring a hybrid model. For reference, the list of nearby school districts and their plans that were in my previous document has changed (more have been added/updated) and that plan is the growing consensus. They are now as follows:

- Upper Darby
Hybrid model in both yellow and green phases. 6ft of distance between students with potential for only (but no less than) 4 feet.
- Haverford
Hybrid model; 5 day in-person was eliminated as of 7/16 with the governor's updated guidelines.
- Philadelphia
Hybrid model.
- Rose Tree Media
Hybrid model
- Springfield (Delaware County)
Hybrid Model
- Upper Moreland
Reviewing a hybrid plan as of July 17th
- Lower Moreland
Presenting an equitable choice between 5 days, hybrid, and virtual

- Upper Merion
Schools will be open 5 days a week as of July 7th.
- Abington
Discussing at next meeting which appears to be in August
- Cheltenham
There will be a plan presented after a series of meetings concluding July 27th
- Wissahickon
School board is presenting July 20th
- Radnor
School board is presenting their decision on July 28th.
- TE
District is presenting their plan the week of 7/20.
- Colonial
The board will be presented with the plan 7/21.
- Marple Newtown
No stated date for presenting plan.

Respectfully,
Jennifer M Solderitsch
Mother of rising Gladwyne 3rd grader and future Gladwyne student

I live at in Wynnewood. Thank you for tabling the idea of opening with less than 6 foot distancing!! I am praying you do not force our experienced teachers over 60 to retire because of the fear for their health. Please keep the safety of the teachers, staff, and students in your mind first, it is more important to keep us all safe and alive than worry about test scores, etc. I hope you will continue to work toward a hybrid model compromise.

Debbie Miller

I had 60 + people who couldn't get on watching on a FB live. You are in violation.

Adrian Seltzer
Wynnewood, PA 19096

I was wondering what tech training you have been providing to staff over the summer? I know that many schools in the area have provided teachers not only with training for how to do a complete academic program virtually but have also provided teachers with the technology to do so. As a parent, I am concerned that hybrid or virtual learning will look like it did last year. Students need synchronous learning for each subject daily as opposed to the asynchronous lessons that were the majority of learning from March-June. In addition, how are the teachers supposed to do this without the full support of the district and education.

If we have a hybrid learning situation, who will be teaching the children at home? Will it be asynchronous while they are at home? If it is the classroom teachers, how are the teachers supposed to teach virtual and face to face simultaneously.

You mentioned that you are asking for teaching input? What kind of input are you asking from the teachers? Have you had open discussion with the teachers in the last few weeks?

What sort of information do you need to make the decision to switch to hybrid?

In addition, I would like to voice my concern regarding the population of students with special needs. There are a number of students who cannot maintain physical distance and wear their masks. We must choose a plan that will work for every student in the district. My concern is that returning to school full time would be a danger to the teachers and students in these classes.

If you start hybrid, you can spend the next six weeks determining what this will look like. You can have the kids meet the teacher and their classmates. They can be set up so that if we need to go to virtual they are ready and if we can come back full time, they will be ready as well. You can have take a safe approach and set the district up for success rather than failure. The teachers can also provide input and the parents need to be able to set up childcare if that is needed.

Thank you for your consideration

Jackie Robins
Bala Cynwyd

Hi! Thank you again for all your time and energy put into trying to provide our kids with a good education and safety during this pandemic!

I have seen a lot of FB posts from parents of special needs children saying they must send their kids to school and they will get a dr note for their kids to not wear a mask. This is concerning to me because I am in favor of my children going back to in person school and do not want them exposed to children not wearing a mask.

If a child is special needs or medically exempt from wearing a mask and is still attending the public school then maybe they should be in a special classroom just for them..... if a teacher is willing to take the risk to teach them and if a bus driver is willing to risk driving them.(It is hard enough to make it safe for them with kids wearing a mask) The rest of the children who are wearing a mask (and may not like it or find it difficult but are still wearing it) do not need to be put at more of a risk having to be in a classroom with kids not wearing a mask. Everybody has the right to advocate for their child but nothing should happen at the expense of other children's health & safety. Maybe they can still receive support working from home? If many kids are allowed to come to school without a mask and are integrated into the same classes with masked children school will end up closing a lot faster and they will end up at home doing virtual anyway. 😞

Thank you again for your time.

Michael Vessal
