

**Official Minutes of the
Oak Park Board of Education District 97
260 Madison Street, Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois
July 9, 2020 Special Meeting**

This meeting was held virtually using Zoom during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. Everyone participated via electronic means.

President Broy called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Broy, Kim, Spurlock, Breymaier, Liebl, Moore, and Kearney
Absent: None
Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Carol Kelley, Associate Superintendent of Education Felicia Starks Turner, Director of Communications Amanda Siegfried, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer Ebony Lofton, Senior Director of Buildings and Grounds Jeanne Keane, Senior Director of Equity Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Technology Michael Arensdorff, Consultant Rob Grossi, and Administrative Assistant Lou Anne Johannesson.

BOARD OF EDUCATION DISCUSSION ON THE BACK TO SCHOOL PLAN

BOARD
DISCUSSION ON
THE BACK TO
SCHOOL PLAN

The administration shared a detailed presentation on the options being considered for the fall back to school plan during the pandemic. Dr. Carol Kelley outlined the district's plan to reopen schools based on a hybrid model that will combine in-person and remote learning. Based on the plan, students will be split into two groups in order to reduce the density in district buildings.

Board questions and comments included:

- Interest was expressed in having childcare providers present during the July 14, 2020 meeting so that the Board can ask questions and share plans?
- Is there a needs assessment or formula beyond Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) that determines what happens if/how the district would go back to full remote learning? It was noted that the communications department is working on a visual that will show when the district would need to switch approaches/plans.
- Will there be a process/timeline for people to say they are not returning? It was reported that this process would need to be operationalized with the core planning team, and collaboration would need to take place with the public health director and school safety teams to identify the specifics.
- Parents are trying to make their pods; when will cohorts be released? It was reported that the principals will work collaboratively to determine cohort organization. One board member expressed concern about pods, noting that they have been a long-time challenge for equity.
- Who is teaching the kids on the remote days? It was reported that the focus will be on core content during on-site days, and synch/a synch experiences on off-site days.
- Can the district look at our data and income levels and try to determine who will most likely send their students back to school?
- Can the district come up with additional criteria with household combined income and offer four days for those families who fall below a certain level?
- There has been a lot of talk about exposure. Has there been conversations about keeping groups of children together with childcare?
- Childcare is the lynch pin of blended caliber. We need to figure out needs of school personnel. Can we create a system that is conducive for supporting student learning? Interest was expressed in seeing the budget numbers and details related to this topic.

- Are there plans to survey families specifically about childcare? It was noted that a joint survey tool would be helpful.
- Interest was expressed in knowing what other models/school district have been considered. Dr. Kelley explained that the district has been in conversations with other districts and superintendents across the state. The decisions made will depend on individual district's conditions. She noted that different districts will have different priorities. For District 97, the priority is the health and safety of students and staff, and authentic learning experiences. She told the Board that equity is imperative. She explained that across the nation, based on what we know now, superintendents are trying to get the students back onsite and align with public health guidelines. Dr. Kelley told the Board that the district must remember the "why". She explained that there is no one solution. She reminded the Board that we are in a pandemic that has caused multiple crises and is complex.
- There is data that indicates that children are asymptomatic. Are we thinking about testing, or require testing, etc.? Dr. Kelley offered to talk to the public health department to see if regular testing is an option.
- Interest was expressed in hearing more about the cost of sick leave that might be used during the pandemic.
- Interest was expressed in knowing how long the district will use the model and what the timeline would be regarding modifications.
- One board member complimented the Summer Launch program, noting that the one-on-one, small groups are successful and there is good relationship building.
- Interest was expressed in knowing more about the summer learnings options.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Due to the nature of a virtual board meeting, the public was asked to email their comment to the Board. All comments that were received prior to 8:00 a.m. were read aloud. The Board made it clear that any comments that were received after that time would be included in the minutes, but not read aloud. President Broy read the following statements.

PUBLIC
COMMENT

Cecilia Culbert

We have to anticipate that Covid-19 transmission among the students may increase if children are also exposed to the flu virus, rhinoviruses and also common cold microorganisms in the fall.

- The planning team should keep up to date on research or data collection of schools in other countries like Germany or Australia (Australia is entering their winter season so their school data will be very relevant for our coming fall and winter seasons).

- Regarding class schedules, please consider the 10-4 plan.

- Please consider offering flexible, fluid options for the curriculum (for example the Kankakee school district down in central Illinois is offering three options: all virtual classes, hybrid online and in person classes, and complete in person classes). Also, if there are outbreaks in the school the transitions between all three will have to be given much thought?

- Please consider contacting the Oak Park Park District to engage their review teams on how they perceived the effectiveness of the safeguards they enacted during their summer camps regarding Covid-19.

Patricia Barrera

If there will be any remote learning, the format should be as uniform as possible and teachers should be well trained on how to use visual platforms. Visual platforms should be used as much as possible for live teaching of the curriculum. Kids need as much time in front of their teachers as possible. It's not effective or fair to expect parents to take on most of the burden of teaching. Teachers should be immediately available at any time throughout the school day. Remote learning should simulate live learning as much as possible.

Jennifer Gorski and Jason Washburn

We are the parents of two children (rising first grader and fifth grader) who attend Hatch Elementary School in District 97. We request that District 97 develop a multi-tiered plan that maximizes all children's opportunity for education and social/emotional development while also safeguarding children, families, teachers, and staff from unnecessary risk from Covid-19.

Consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), we believe that children will be best served by a plan for full-time in-person instruction for the 2020/2021 school year. Our personal experiences with e-learning and remote instruction, our professional roles as clinical child and adolescent psychologists, as well as the evidence and guidelines provided – to date – suggest a need for in-person instruction. If a plan can be devised that minimizes risk for infection and community spread of Covid-19 while allowing for full-time in-person instruction, we strongly encourage District 97 to employ that plan. In developing such a plan, we encourage District 97 to utilize all available resources in creating a transparent and evidence-based approach to minimize risk during in-person instruction. For example, school administrators should be examining possibilities for creative use of all available spaces in a school to maximize physical distancing during in-person instruction.

We have an appreciation for the immense complexity involved in the planning for in-person instruction; however, the risk of in-person instruction in the current context of lower community transmission in Oak Park and Illinois, appears less than the risk of social, emotional, and educational harm and inequity should families not be offered this option.

We also recognize that this is a very fluid situation. Due to the fact that there are many unknowns related to the school year and that the trajectory of the pandemic in Oak Park and Illinois may change, we also believe there needs to be clear plan(s) and infrastructure to support a more rigorous and meaningful remote instruction option(s), either in a hybrid situation that maximizes in-person education or for a fully remote learning situation if in-person instruction cannot be safely accomplished. Any remote instruction, particularly for younger children or children with special educational needs, must involve substantial virtual interaction with teachers and other children, and minimize the burden placed on parents and other caregivers for delivering instruction. It is also important for District 97 to have a robust plan in place to support organizational and executive functioning in older children who may engage in more independent remote learning. Finally, as clinical child and adolescent psychologists, we believe it is absolutely critical for all students to receive necessary mental health services and supports regardless of in-person or remote learning options.

Caroline Nikolakakis

I am terrified of sending my own kids back to school. I am terrified for my students -past and present- returning to school. I am scared for myself and my fellow teachers and staff, and I am scared to say that in the current climate of our village. Most of all I am so very terrified we will ignore the facts and spread Covid-19.

I am surprised and really scared at how vociferous the demand to return to school full-time all day every day is though I understand and empathize with the many reasons behind it. I am confused, scared (again), and sad every time I hear or read we should be "comfortable with the risk." How can we be okay with

risking the lives and yes, I did say LIVES of the children, teachers, and staff of District 97? My kids are most definitely showing the impact of this isolation and removal from school, their friends, and life in general as we knew it, and I daydream about going back for them and for myself but it simply is not safe. Even if we could test everyone a month and two weeks before school started and continue testing as needed, it isn't safe.

Science and common sense tells us that a full return to school even if by some miracle we can get the funding and logistics in order for proposed safety measures, is NOT a risk we should take with our kids, or teachers and staff. This is so hard and it involves a lot of sacrifice but short term sacrifice for long term goals in a life and death situation is what we have to do. It is an ordeal even for those of us like myself and many people in Oak Park who have a lot of options as we ride this out. This push for a full return to school is being painted as a choice between our kids physical and mental health. That is an inaccurate, politically motivated, and extreme view. There are smarter choices which may not be ideal but will certainly be safer. Still, if the alternative is serious illness or death, and make no mistake it IS, it seems worth it.

I have been teaching for just about a decade at the school where my own children attend school. I have been in a 100 year old building and dealt with physical realities that impact student comfort, health, ability to learn, and safety every day. I, will limit myself to a few pertinent examples for the sake of time but there are many, many more. I along with every teacher I know have so many anecdotes about times we have no heat and our students have to keep on their coats, hats, and gloves for days and even weeks to keep at a just right temperature. Now imagine having to deal with that with what we know about how this pandemic keeps infection spreading.

I could describe the lack of air conditioning in the k-5 schools and what it is like to try to teach with open windows over two fans to children who physically cannot keep their heads up from the heat. I could also mention how many windows are broken and cannot open - for many years I have only been able to open one window and usually it involved me climbing up onto a heating vent, table, or chair. My experience with this or more accurately my student's experiences with this and are not unusual across the district in the K-5 buildings. This has been an issue since I started in the district and teachers have been speaking up about it for years and it is *still* an issue waiting to be fixed. If you think fresh air and controlling the air quality while Covid-19 rages is manageable, think again.

I could tell you how our school has eight accessible to all kid bathrooms and approximately five within classrooms for over 300 kids and three adult bathrooms. We have to send kids alone and they regularly linger and play and practice what I think it fair to say is unhygienic bathroom use because the kids in our building are between five-12 years of age and kids play and do gross things because they are kids. In regular times this can be concerning but this is NOT a regular time. Those bathroom practices could infect so many so easily.

One of the three bathrooms designated for adults in our building is shared by the nurse's office where kids who have gotten sick, had accidents, are injured, or run fevers go to use the facilities. The other bathroom in the office is used by anyone who walks in the building on the regular - parents, delivery people, and staff. The one bathroom in our teacher's lounge has one toilet. All the bathrooms are small, poorly ventilated, old, and out of date, The water regularly runs brown when you go to wash your hands. Would that convince you when I say there is no way that this district could, even with all the time and money in the world, fix those issues? Can you understand when I say there is no way to wash the bathrooms often enough to make them clean enough to prevent the spread of colds, the flu, the multitudes of viruses that ravage our school every day of every year much less the highly infectious and contagious Covid-19?

Additionally we have great custodians who seem to have full plates. How will the additional regular deep cleaning required happen? Are we hiring additional staff? How often will it be cleaned? What about issues of privacy and potential embarrassment if we have cleaning during the day? How can we regulate the bathrooms to be safe? I implore you to talk to the teachers who are in these buildings and ask them about their bathroom procedures. Most of us use them because we have to. Before this I would have told you it was annoying and maybe even laughed at the state of our bathrooms because what else can you do? I am not laughing now. Now when I think about this push to return to school, my stomach is in knots hoping my kids will not use the bathroom and get sick. Hoping YOUR kids won't get sick.

If you look up teachers not being able to use the bathroom memes, you would stumble into a world of humor those of us who teach have long used to deal with the fact that we rarely get to use the bathroom during the day. Teachers wait to use the restroom for unhealthy amounts of time because we have to. We cannot leave our students and we do not get many or sometimes any breaks. That is a teaching reality that I have laughed about with colleagues many times. Again, I am not laughing now. I am wondering how we will logistically manage it and hoping that when the 30+ staff share the three adult bathrooms we do not get sick.

What kind of PPE could possibly be provided for students and staff? Outbreaks are on the rise again and hospitals are once again approaching capacity in so many places nearby. Masks and other critical supply shortages were the reality less than four months ago, I hope that production has been enough to prepare for what is going on now but if hospitals are running short, how are schools re-convening going to keep up with the demand and how will we pay for it? Each year we families are asked to provide supplies from pencils to Kleenex and Clorox wipes. Will we be asked to provide our own gear? I am not exaggerating when I say kids have sneezed, coughed, and thrown up on themselves, other kids, and adults around them every day. There are accidents with urine and feces and injuries with blood. Can the district really guarantee us the space and equipment that would mitigate that? No they cannot through no fault of their own and that risk should be unacceptable to all of us. I am so scared. I am scared for our kids, teachers, and staff. I am scared at what might be caught and brought home and spread to families I have known and grown with and who have become my neighbors and friends as our kids attend school and grow up together.

I was astounded and disappointed that the governor made an announcement about returning to school before June had even ended as reports of outbreaks are everywhere. As we moved into Phase four I read avidly about what was considered okay. When you go the webpage for the state it says Restore Illinois and then Revitalization - Phase four. Two things are foremost in my mind from the first paragraph under these headings. First "Additional measures can be ***carefully lifted*** allowing for schools and child care programs to reopen ***with social distancing policies in place***. "and second "Gatherings with ***50 people or fewer will be permitted***. Testing is widely available, and tracing is commonplace."

As I have read more, it becomes clear that the governor is leaving many of the choices to the individual school districts while contradicting these two statements. Why? There are so many possible reasons but why waste time on that? If we have the power to make safe decisions for our kids, we should really think about 50 people or fewer. We have over 300 kids at our building (which is one of the smaller ones in Oak Park) and over 30 teachers and staff. How can we possibly cut that up to meet these requirements? How can we clean enough even if we did? We can't. We shouldn't. Additionally, testing and tracing is not commonplace or easy to obtain. How could the district be expected to have the money, staff, and space to do this is the state has not been able to make it happen? To the best of my knowledge the state is not offering to make this happen at the schools they are saying we can open in the fall. Please do not let political irresponsibility endanger our kids.

Kids do not learn or exist at distance. Teaching is truly a vocation and teachers and staff members try to be there the kids academically and emotionally. I, like all my fellow teachers have helped injured children, consoled them when they are sad or sick, and counseled them when they are scared. As a teacher, whether I am guiding small math groups with the myriad of manipulatives needed to make a concept concrete or crouched in a small, windowless closet with 20-22 six and seven year olds, shushing them and asking them not to move as we practice required active shooter drills I care so much about them. We all do. Now I wonder how we can do these state mandated drills and be safe. I wonder how we can have math and be safe. There are no easy answers but that has always been the case. It has never stopped us as teachers or parents. As we tell our kids when things are hard: "You can do it and I will help you." Right now that means helping each other by staying apart.

Again I invite you to talk to teachers, especially those of us who teach younger kids, about kids and their mucus membranes. Kids pick their noses like it is going out of style. Yet another thing that I have joked about that is true and now dangerous. They also have their fingers and items in their mouth all the time. It is a developmentally appropriate way to seek sensation that feels good and helps them focus. They are also playing with loose teeth all the time. They rub their eyes, stick fingers in their ears, touch their face, touch each other, lick their hands, lick their knees, lick things, and touch each other. CONSTANTLY. Before this pandemic I thought of it as what it is - a normal part of childhood and something those of us in the rooms see, sometimes chuckle about, and deal with. Maybe you have noticed these things at home during remote learning. Now multiply it by 20. Or more.

Usually teachers, staff, and kids build immunity over the course of their years at school to the more benign viruses that the normal behaviors of children spread. Still my kids, the kids I have taught, and every person who works in the building have had terrible illnesses. I have been as sick as I have ever been since I became a teacher. Most of us have at least one terrible illness a year after five-10 years. Some years it is more. This year if we return to school it could well be Covid-19.

Perhaps you think I am exaggerating? I am not. For the past few years asking children to keep their fingers out of their mouths, noses, and eyes has become so frequent I made up a song. I sing "First Grade Fingers..." and the kids respond "are far from your face!" and half the class pulls their hands away from their mucus membranes with a smile. I change up the melody to keep it fresh because it is CONSTANT. Even if we magically reduce class sizes, alternate days, and somehow manage to keep the kids at six feet away, they put their fingers in those places nonstop and that spreads illness. An asymptomatic child could easily infect others if we rush to share space.

And we share materials. We have to. Sharing space and materials is part of what we are missing not being at school. Even if we manage to regulate the physical aspects, how on earth can we manage it emotionally? I cannot tell you how many kids need physical proximity to stay on task or a hug when they are scared or hurt or sick or have to leave their families in the morning. What are teachers supposed to do? Pat them on the head with two yard sticks taped together? What if they do become ill? What are the protocols? What about the inevitable fears they will have? How can I assuage them when they are valid?

The emotional wellbeing of my kids and yours weighs heavy on my heart and my mind. My own kids have suffered and I know yours have too. Teachers and staff watched and listened and tried to help students and families when these changes happened overnight while doing the same for our own families, it was so hard. It still is. We are still processing and dealing with it. But we are doing so safely. Now we have the benefit of time to prepare for mostly if not all remote learning for the time being. It is a hard choice. It is the safe choice. It is the right choice.

Also kids are not necessarily good listeners. (Neither are we grownups to be fair!) Issues of personal space come up constantly. I would doubt our ability to keep kids at a distance in the best of times but this

is the worst of times. That physical proximity has always spread illness like wildfire in classrooms and the school building, and now the illness is life threatening. And what about other illnesses? Are we going to do temperature checks? How will that work? Are teachers going to be expected to manage and report that on top of our overly full plates?

Schools have a 24 hours fever free rule. Is that rule going to be expanded? Will a fever mean your child must take a Covid-19 test? It seems it should, and then who will verify before said children are allowed back? Or would two weeks of remote learning be required? Also if a child runs a fever or feels sick, it sometimes takes hours or until the end of the day for someone to get them. What if we have many kids who need to wait? We have two cots in our small nurse's office.

Are teachers going to have rotations days or will we be exposed to all the time? We have had a year's long sub crisis. How on earth will it be feasible to continue school when teachers inevitably fall ill? Will we have to stay home for two weeks if we run a fever? What if we have no fever but feel sick?

How on earth will we be able to make lunch and recess feasible?

What about our kids with special needs, compromised immunity, and other health concerns? What about teachers and staff who might have compromised immunity? How can we protect them if we return to school? We are all vulnerable to Covid-19 but how can we ask those who are most vulnerable to take the risk?

Something else that weighs heavily into this situation is the other people at home or in our lives who we could possibly be exposed to Covid-19. My father who lives with us is in his 70s and has some underlying health issues. We have practiced an abundance of caution to try to make sure we are not putting him at risk. Returning to school when the Covid-19 crisis is spiraling out of control seems like we did all that for nothing. It is unfathomable to me that we would not continue to do all we can to protect the many people in all our lives like him.

I live and work in the community so I also have the luxury of not having to arrange for after school care. How is that going to be managed? For many years the classroom I taught in had an after school program in it for several hours after school ended. Would this be spread out to even more classrooms? Wouldn't that increase the exposure and risks? There are a myriad of concerns around this possibility as well.

I have seen such a spectrum of adherence and non-adherence here in Oak Park since school went to remote learning, through the shelter in place, and through the Illinois state phases. How can we meet this demand that we all now adhere to the most unsafe model when people simply have not been following the rules. When the parks were closed, I saw people using them anyway. Throughout this time I have seen people fragrantly disregarding the guidelines put forth by the CDC. Even now I regularly see big groups and people without masks. These choices put us all at risk and will continue to do so. I wish I could be at school. I want to be at school. I want the kids and my kids to return WHEN it is safe to do so and it is not.

Schools and the staff at them are always called to face inequities that exist in our community and our larger society. I am deeply aware and pained by the suffering this causes and the way the inequities we have always faced are exacerbated. We have and will do our very best, but to try to do so while ignoring the fact that being together - even if we manage to pull off the proposed safety protocols - will still most definitely spread a disease that can make anyone, yes ANYONE (including children) very ill, have long term health problems, or die is beyond frightening. Based on my decade of experience actually teaching with kids in these buildings, I feel confident when I say it will be impossible to try to implement these measures. Going back will be dangerous and likely to cause an outbreak that will create illness, cost lives,

and set us back in trying to get back to school and life as we knew it. **Let's not lose the progress we have made to protect each other.**

We are living through an unprecedented time, but the facts of how infectious disease, especially this deadly infectious disease do not change no matter how hard and heart-breaking that makes our daily lives. *This is hard and heart breaking but it is also survivable.* We need to focus on surviving and wait until it is truly safe to return to school. This choice is not just for the individual schools, Oak Park, Illinois, the U.S. During this ordeal we have been examining societal inequities on a micro and macro level. We have been seeing and trying to understand our connections globally. We have engaged in what learning is all about - productive struggle. It is not easy but it is so worth it. Let's keep that commitment to each other strong and think about the example it will set and the literal health impact it will have on this community and all those larger ones it is connected to.

Right now I implore all of you to realize *being comfortable with the risk does nothing to reduce it.* We know how to reduce the risk and the number one thing to do is stay apart in small groups. We should focus on robust remote learning with socially distant, outdoor, small groups for short times to see each other and learn in person until we have reduced or eliminated the spread and/or a vaccine is available. It won't be the same and it will be hard, but it is better than getting and/or spreading Covid-19. School is a community that is more than a building and right now being in these buildings is not safe.

I wish I could read this out loud myself. I wish you could see my face and hear my voice so you could hear my sincerity and justifiable anxiety. I also worked from home while my kids were remote learning and I know how hard it is. I am worried for my kids too. I read the APA statements and have considered them carefully. I am also a teacher and want to say something that I do not think is said or heard enough. We too are experts. While the wonderful doctors of the APA have so much medical knowledge about children and how they grow, so too do we teachers and ours is informed by every day experiences and more intensely focused on their emotional well-being. I believe the APA statements are valid but there is room for more than one voice of expertise and in a pandemic, we have to weigh our decisions differently. The advice of epidemiologists and those working on the front lines with Covid-19, like that of vast majority of teachers/child experts I know, think a return to school is a dangerous mistake. Let's continue to plan for remote learning with in person socially distant small group meet ups when we can. Let's stick together to reach that place of real safety so we can be together again.

Kevin Hartman

By now you have heard from many voices of concerned parents with views ranging from pausing school reopening to fully reopening five days a week. I believe these concerns come from different perspectives on risks and priorities - with data from epidemiologists who offer warnings about transmission rates, and data from pediatricians who offer warnings about childhood development. I would like to offer a different view, not without its own challenges, but with potential to address concerns from all sides of this difficult issue.

We have disparate needs from our family units and lots of things we are balancing. This is a tough problem to solve with a one-size solution that can address every one of our concerns. There's another factor to consider for a lot of us Oak Parkers as well. Not all of us are the youngest parents, or the healthiest. I myself am in my 50s, my BMI is well above the 30 or 40 line from where it should be, and I'm a type II diabetic. Everything the science tells me is that I'm in that at-risk category.

So naturally as a family we do all we can to protect ourselves, because I think a pediatrician will also say there is a lot of emotional damage that comes from the loss of a parent. But I can't believe we're the only family out there being extra cautious with our risks being a bit higher. I've heard a few people talk about pods and keeping a set of kids together. That actually sounds like a pretty good idea.

Extending on this pod concept, why not give families and teachers in varying risk categories an option to pod together, in similar groups? Pods in the zero tolerance category can agree to not go out to movie houses, restaurants, plane trips, etc. People with more flexibility in their tolerances can similarly pod and agree on their activities together. I think we have enough people in this community with different needs that could represent a diverse enough set of options and pods for everyone.

In prior years the school performed classroom assignment based on the needs of the student. But with the strange times we live in - perhaps that decision should include a more holistic view and take in the family situation and what the family can commit to as well. That additional consideration would give families and teachers with similar risk tolerances a chance to manage their risks together.

A "Family/Teacher Pod Pact" would empower families and teachers with a new tool. A lever that is currently lacking. The two options under consideration are at polar extremes; they are a choice between letting our kids fall behind so a guardian can survive or take an unacceptable amount of risk so that our kids can have a better education. These options frankly give those in my family situation an impossible choice. But families with similar risks grouped together need nothing but their own knowledge of self to impose controls that limit their risks accordingly. This is a lever the school district cannot pull for us in uniform fashion. It should be given to the pod to manage instead.

To execute on the idea, the district will need to conduct a new survey to collect scope on participation interest and gauge risk tolerances. A potential risk tolerance questionnaire could be fashioned similar to assessment outlined in this info graphic:

https://www.nebraskamed.com/sites/default/files/images/covid19/RiskLevelInfographic_062620.jpg?fbclid=IwAR1c0tp-A57_RITc_XNoDoGXTCLbuDWjIJrj_1Y8YItNILtdBgBIY71iUvQ.

If school resources are in short supply, then you are in luck. I have a background in data science and experience constructing and conducting surveys. I would be more than happy to volunteer myself as a resource to assist the village in collecting this data if I may be of service.

As a final step before class assignment, the school would add another opt-in selection for families. Choose your pod category cluster. Mention what the pod may expect of them and relate them to specific activities pods in any of the clusters may perform (or avoid) to manage risks. Pod those families and teachers based on the responses, and leave the rest of it up to us. Do nothing different other than what is mandated by State guidelines. Pods can agree on their final list of tolerances, together. The schools don't carry any decision made by the pod as a liability. The pod is not managed by the school, or the district. It is a tool of partnership with the school coordinated by families who are deeply concerned about themselves and their loved ones. We understand that there are limits to what the school can and can't do, and that there are really no good options. Let the family and teacher community help you do this.

I believe this idea can shift the balance in how we deal with a near insurmountable challenge. It gives families and teachers in similar situations a lever to manage their risks. The families and educators in pods can each take different levels of precautions, tailored for their lifestyle. The schools do not need to differentiate in their precautions.

This can be a win for everybody. We just need a little bit of help. A little bit of energy to pull it off. But in the end, solving tough problems is what Oak Park is about. Every life we can help save will be worth it.

Ian Kash

I would like to register my strong disapproval of any "hybrid" plan that involves students attending only a limited fraction of days in person and attending remotely other days. Such a plan seems to be to be the

worst of both worlds, delivering neither the educational benefits of full in person instruction nor the health benefits of remote learning.

In particular, it seems that such a hybrid model, at best, only moderately reduces the risks associated with in person instruction. Teachers will still be exposed to all their students and the additional distancing seems likely to have a relatively small effect on the possibility of spreading infections given that other appropriate measures are being taken. Meanwhile the complexity of arranging childcare for the remote days creates new opportunities for infection since children will be in different groupings than in their classrooms.

Studies are suggesting that children are, on average, already substantially behind in terms of educational progress due to the remote learning during the last school year. We cannot afford to see children fall further behind unless there is absolutely no other option. The CDC and AAP guidelines, as well as my reading of the ISBE recommendations, all emphasize that while distancing is ideal to the extent possible, it should not stand in the way of in person education.

I strongly encourage the district to develop the best possible plan to enable full time in person instruction and resort to period(s) of full remote learning only if the state of the pandemic worsens so as to make in person instruction unacceptably risky.

Jason Callicoa

While I understand the safest course for school administrators is to hedge their bets by starting a hybrid schedule, that decision would create a huge burden on my family and likely many others. A hybrid schedule would force us to essentially home school our children 2 or 3 days out of the week. I work downtown, and my workplace is back open. I don't have family members living nearby who are sufficiently proficient with technology to be able to home school my children on "e-learning" days. I, and many parents like me, depend on schools to teach our children so that we can do our jobs and earn a living. E-learning, whatever the excuse, forces parents to do the schools' jobs, or hire caregivers to do the schools' jobs. We need the schools to do their part and keep up with the rest of society in safely reopening. Don't create new problems for the parents and families in your district by lagging behind the rest of society with a hybrid schedule. You can reopen safely, five days a week, and doing anything less is inexcusable.

Archana Goyal

I understand that this is a challenging time for all of us and appreciate all the effort that is going into planning for an effective 2020/2021 school year. I understand everyone's situation is different and am interested in hearing more about a remote learning model. There are many families across District 97 that for one reason or another (e.g. elderly family members, immunocompromised children) will not feel comfortable sending their kids to school physically until and unless a vaccine is developed or better treatment options are available.

Could you please help us understand what options, if any, are being considered for these situations? If 100 percent remote learning is an option, what is being done to ensure that it is more robust than it was in the spring? Are there expectations being set for the teachers across the district so that all children are to have Zoom, asynchronous learning opportunities for the same amount of time per grade? (in the spring some grades had regular Zoom classes while others at the same grade level had none.)

I understand there isn't a one size fits all solution here so thank you for your effort in working to figure out this, hopefully temporary, new 'normal.'

Misty Taylor

Our family would like to voice support for a District 97 fall plan that prioritizes the health & safety of our teachers, staff, and students, and utilizes our limited resources efficiently.

Accounting for the realities of a pandemic that is not yet under control, the lack of federal response and emergency funding, and a multitude of considerations specific to our community...

It is our position that a 2-day hybrid plan--- one that can easily transfer to an e-learning model during anticipated closures next academic year--- is the soundest option for our district to pursue.

We would like to see District 97 focus its resources towards

- A) Strict adherence to CDC / IDPH guidelines
- B) Developing a robust, engaging, and pedagogically sound e-learning curriculum
- C) Prioritizing resources to meet the needs of students at-risk

We appreciate the amount of work being done by our District 97 Administrators, Board Members, and community volunteers to meet this incredible challenge. Thank you for your ongoing efforts and care to provide our children with a positive learning experience through these unprecedented times.

Rachel Will

It was mentioned by Dr. Kelley that modifying the school buildings to accommodate more space between the children and classes would cost approximately \$7,000,000. For transparency we would like to see not only the plan(s) the district provided to the contractors for initial estimates but also think the breakdown of your chosen contractor's numbers should provide as well. Something more than just an executive proposal showing bottom line number (need to see how much of the \$7m number is O&P, general conditions, contingency, etc.... in other words want to make certain this proposal has been scrubbed by a construction professional acting on behalf of District 97 and not the administration who seems to be looking for the easiest way to keep our children from coming back). Being in the construction industry I can assure you \$7,000,000 seems grossly out of line with where the numbers should be landing for reorganization of programming of spaces, but also think the plans the district created for pricing will help clarify why / how his initial estimate came to be. I'm quite certain there are substantial ways to value engineer the district's thoughts for something that would make more economical sense. And if not, I'm quite certain your chosen contractor's numbers can be scrubbed for potential price gouging and potentially taking advantage of our situation here.

There is no reason the children and classrooms cannot simply space out within the public spaces lunch rooms, libraries, gymnasiums, auditorium, even hall ways and propose far cheaper "spacing elements" that would assure their health and safety.

The district threw a \$7,000,000 price tag on this without any supporting documentation or signs of reviewing first. Before we all simply accept this number want to review as well.

Additionally we would like to see the research the district is consulting on the hybrid in person learning program being proposed. We would like to understand how this is in the best interest of the students, as many experts in the fields of child psychology and education have been saying that not going back to school with a normal daily schedule is far more detrimental to the children's social and emotional health, and has a much more far reaching impact.

Natalia Joseph

I am in 8th grade at Percy Julian Middle School. I believe that students will suffer from remote learning full time or only two days a week both mentally and academically. I believe that instead of two groups of students going to school on separate days, we should all go to school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and

Friday. And leave Wednesday for cleaning (i.e. surface cleaning). Every student should be mandated to wear a mask and any students showing any and all symptoms of flu, cold or Covid-19 should be sent home immediately. All teachers should be mandated to wear a mask and or face shield and any teacher showing any symptoms of flu, cold or Covid-19 should be sent home immediately. Parents not comfortable with sending their child to school should be given an option of complete remote learning in which teachers would set up zooms during class so remote learning students would be able to ask questions and learn effectively, students should be allowed to opt in and out of this program as they please. To reduce the amount of students each teacher sees daily, we should do a block schedule in which that would entail 4 classes a day, doubling the length of the classes which would allow teachers to only see 4 sets of students a day. Every other day we would switch our schedules, and on Wednesdays we would have our classes for normal length or zoom. We also need a better remote learning system entailing, (zoom classes, monitored tests, etc.). Just to reiterate I believe Covid-19 is a serious issue but students will suffer and education is also very important. If you guys need help in anyway implementing a new system I am happy to help in any way I can.

Elisa Rehn

As a physician as well as a parent of two children in District 97, it is vital to get our children back to full, in person school. If the district follows through on appropriate public health recommendations, this will be done safely. Just as hospitals needed to support their staff with PPE, District 97 needs to do the same for its teachers. My kids will wear masks. While my older daughter (with an IEP) had amazing teachers last year who provided the most incredible support during e-learning, there is no substitute for in person school.

Elizabeth Cook

If District 97 adopts the hybrid model for the return to school, will it be able to ensure that children within the same household attend school on the same days, so that working parents are able to have some full days off to focus on their work?

In addition, if remote learning continues, what changes will District 97 make to ensure that it is teachers, not parents and guardians, who shoulder the primary responsibility for teaching? Can teachers be available on zoom or another format for five hours per day to provide instruction and guidance, as they would during a normal school day? This is particularly important for families with multiple young children, who cannot complete assignments without oversight.

Working parents are simply not able to keep up with their own paid jobs while also acting as teachers and providing childcare for their children, particularly in multi-child households. District 97 teachers should take a more active role in managing the school day than they did during the spring shutdown.

District 97 Teacher Librarians

Katie Noonan, Irving, Jamie Winchell, Julian, Sharon R. Pearce, Longfellow, Richard Withers, Beye, Erin Howe, Hatch, Laurie Conley, Whittier, Jennifer Nelson, Brooks, Nicole Chinski, Holmes, Carolyn Frame, Lincoln, Jessica Baylian, Mann

The District 97 Teacher Librarians want to ensure that District 97 Board Members and Administrators remember the important role of teacher librarians in both remote and on-site learning. This comes on the heels of our concerns that ISBE did not include our professional organization, Association of School Librarian Educators (AISLE), when releasing guidelines for transitioning in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year.

Under the guidelines, teacher librarians are asked to make sacrifices by giving up library spaces and handling potentially hazardous materials. We are already planning for ways we can provide effective

library instruction no matter how the district opens in the fall. During remote learning, teacher librarians made many contributions to teaching and learning across the district: collaborating with teachers on virtual lessons and projects, running virtual book clubs and read-alouds, and troubleshooting technology problems.

Teacher librarians are flexible and make adjustments that benefit positive, inclusive, equitable learning environments that focus on the whole child. Teacher librarians will rise to the challenges of the 2020-21 school year, and we want to be acknowledged as essential to the operation of each school.

Steve Coughlin

Thank you for allowing us (parents of District 97 Students) voices to be heard. That said, I think the fall 2020 planning survey for families was misleading and seemed to lead parents to answers that the district could easily misinterpret.

The survey as a whole was too long, and the questions/answers were often repetitive and conflicting. This will certainly lead to an ambiguous response from the community, and it may have even pushed many parents to not complete the survey at all, I know I felt that way halfway through it...

I would suggest the district take the time to hear from the community more candidly and in the public forum more frequently before arriving at a decision. I don't believe the tone of District 97 parents can be gauged through a survey, especially one as convoluted as what we've seen so far.

The question is simple:

Are you comfortable sending your child back to full-time on-site school with masks and social distancing (when possible) as long as Illinois is in phase four?

I think it's clear that Phase five is a full school year out at the very minimum. We need to consider the risks of children losing a full school year and possibly more, from which I don't think they'll ever fully recover.

The evidence published by multiple agencies such as ISBE and AAP supports the idea that full-time on-site learning with masks and social distancing is the best option for the vast majority of students, especially those at the elementary level. That said, accommodations should be made available to those not comfortable with this idea or living with anyone at high risk.

I think I speak for everyone when I say in a perfect world we all prefer on-site learning to e-learning, we know it is far more effective as we have lived through it, we've seen our children's progress with regard to learning stop this spring with the adaption of the e-learning model. I hope everything is done to ensure that we do not miss this opportunity to get our kids engaged in school again with five days/week on-site learning, anything less would be a failure and major disappointment.

Jennifer Settle

If a hybrid school week goes forward, will there be an opportunity for parents to choose which days their child will attend in-person school in order to coordinate with work and outside childcare/support networks?

How is the district negotiating or weighing the effects that will come from many children needing to find alternate care on days they are not present in school? It seems the net risk is higher if children are attending many different childcare options on alternate days rather than being with same group of children in the classroom for five days a week.

And finally, please know we appreciate your continued hard work in figuring out this very complicated situation!

Amanda Moore

I have lived in Oak Park for 25 years and have two adult children. I have one in Brook's Middle School now.

I need to rescind my fall 2020 Planning Survey entry because I advocated the opening of school. At the time my heart was aching because my daughter was lonely and depressed and needed to return to a normal routine. Then my brain kicked in.

I've been a nurse for 25 years and I've dealt directly with patients with Covid-19. This virus is not a joke, it kills people. It only takes one infected person to make an entire household sick. The idea of a school full of children from all over Oak Park scares me to death. I would rather my daughter fall a little behind in school than get sick and possibly die from this virus.

I think it would be more feasible to create an enhanced remote learning experience than to create a way to screen and social distance all the children on a daily basis.

I've seen too much and I'm too scared to send my daughter to school. I don't take my health for granted and neither should anyone else in Oak Park.

If we are offered a choice, I will keep my daughter at home. She will not be happy about it but during this challenging time we must all make sacrifices. I think she is old enough to learn this lesson.

Kimberly Garnett

In my research of all of our family's options for the fall, I have come across many secular homeschool curriculum companies that partner with school districts to provide virtual instruction (with teachers supplied and employed by the company). I've also heard of other districts around the country implementing such instruction to families who opt out of in-person school for the fall. I thought this might be an interesting option to investigate, which might also reduce the number of overall students in the building.

Roger Kiley

First, thank you for your efforts in trying to figure out a way forward in these very difficult times. It is clear from reading the state guidelines and the varying approaches taken by different localities that no one really knows the best way to move forward, that there is no clear "right" answer to handling a return to school in the fall. So who are the most important voices to listen when considering the return to school in the fall, while a deadly pandemic is still going on in our country? Teachers. They are the ones who will be on the front lines of a possible return to in-person teaching. We would be asking them to put not only their lives at risk, but the lives of their families. What is their comfort level on returning to teach, to being in a classroom with a number of children who have varying practices in regard to social distancing in their free time?

If the teachers are willing to entertain the idea of in-person teaching, then the next question is whether the community is willing to take the risk of sending their children to school. The risk of increased spread of the virus, balancing it against the importance of in-person education. If the community prefers to prioritize education over mitigating/combatting the pandemic, AND the teachers have reached a comfort level to teach - then fine, let's open the schools full time and see what happens. At this point I don't think that opening the schools is reasonable or wise, but I also don't pretend to know all the answers, or the

most up to date science on the virus - if the majority decides the schools should open, then I will deal with it.

But attempting a hybrid approach of part-time in-person school and part time remote schooling is feasible or effective for either the health or educational challenges we are facing. It runs the risk of failing on both fronts - making the educational side less effective than if it was solely remote or solely in person - and at the same time causing an increased spread of the virus, likely resulting in deaths that would not have occurred otherwise. If that is going to be the decision of the school board, then I hope that they will share the reasoning and scientific support for the decision.

Thank you again for taking the time to work through this incredibly difficult problem, and I would again implore you to listen to the teachers. They did not sign up to put their lives at risk, and we as a community, should not force them to.

Jennifer Tammen and Kevin Fuhr

First, we'd like to thank you for your service, especially during the last 4 months. Like all of us, you are dealing with the challenges brought on by the pandemic. And on top of that you are in the position of making critical decisions that impact hundreds of families. Now more than ever we are relying on you, as our elected school board, to provide leadership and representation of your constituents. We appreciate but certainly do not envy your positions.

We have an incoming kindergartener and second grader at Mann. We are in support of a return to full-time, five days a week in-classroom learning. Rather than repeat much of what has already been stated, I'll get right to some key points and questions that I have. Note that some of my comments are based on my understanding of some of the options being considered by the Board with respect to the education model for the 2020-2021 school year:

Having a staggered schedule is problematic on a number of levels.

1. First, the District has indicated they are working with the Park District to identify child care options. How can kids in child care do e-learning? This is especially true for the younger kids. For families with working parents and guardians, like us, this means that our kids will not even benefit from e-learning and essentially receive two days of education per week. And even more important is that they will be missing out on socialization with one another, which is how kids grow, learn and thrive, even at a social distance. This is totally unacceptable.
2. Second, if the Park District is to be the point of child care, then won't that require kids to essentially be exposed to a much larger group of kids from other schools than if they were to only reside in their home school? If we are trying to minimize exposure to the virus, we should be looking at ways to keep the same group of kids together during the week, not with one group a couple of days and then with different groups and spaces on the other days. We believe that this could have the unintended consequences of increasing exposure while providing only part-time learning. This would eliminate any benefits of a part-time in class schedule and would arguably increase the risk of exposure to families.
3. We are curious to know if the Board has considered the models that a number of area private schools are adopting that achieve full-time return to the classroom. Such models include keeping each class together in a "pod" so that the same kids are together all day, each day. It essentially switches the classrooms from communal spaces to the individual desks with supply storage, eating lunch in the classroom, and rotating outdoor play with walks in order to have time to disinfect outdoor play equipment, etc.

4. We have also heard of another model in which the elementary school kids are full-time in class and the middle school students are remote. The middle school space is used to spread out the elementary classes. I'm not suggesting we make our middle schools remote, but I like the example of leveraging district assets to realize solutions.

Hephzibah is doing an amazing job with their summer camp program. The kids are in the same groups every day and they are following all state and local protocols. Has District 97 spoken with other schools and organizations about their approaches and best practices? If so, what is your position on how these could be adapted for District 97 schools? If you have not studied this, then why not?

5. Has there been a consideration of a model that has full-time in-class and a remote option for those families that are not able or comfortable with coming back to the physical classroom? It seems that school districts should create a position for a Director of E-Learning for this purpose, which I could see being an on-going and highly relevant role.

6. Finally, we were surprised to learn that Dr. Kelley is in the final stages of the interview process for another position in Madison, WI. While it is certainly Dr. Kelley's prerogative to seek other employment, it is very unsettling to know that her job search and process has been going on during this critical time where we need focused and dedicated leadership. We can only hope that the quality of our schools stays intact and enough of us can continue to work full time and keep our jobs so that we can pay the property taxes to cover the new superintendent's salary.

We implore you as our elected school board officials to consider the needs and concerns of your constituent families. We ask that you vote to direct staff to thoughtfully, creatively, and safely leverage the rich human and physical resources of our district to get our kids back in the classroom full time this fall.

Luke Alberts

I believe the board should prioritize younger children having more days in the schools versus older children. Ideally I think the schedule could be something like as follows:

- K to 3- 4 days a week in person
- 4 to 5- 3 days a week in person
- 6 to 8- 2 days a week in person

Younger children have been determined not to be spreaders of the virus and are not-capable of benefiting from remote learning.

I understand that this is a difficult decision in front of you and thanks for the work you do for the community.

Matt Carmichael

What specific school districts are you modeling your remote learning plans from, and what have you learned from those districts?

Dan Fitzgerald

There is an emotional, social, medical and financial cost to our children missing out on their education.

We recognize that in early 2019, severe measures were necessary, but it is time to return to normalcy and encourage those who are most at risk to quarantine, rather than all children.

Schools need to reopen for in-person learning as soon as possible.
There should be no "hybrid" approach. E-learning has not been effective.

District 97 should start the school year early (August 1 or sooner) in an effort to make up for the education our children have missed.

In the event District 97 does not offer a full slate of in-person classes for the 20-21 school year, property tax refunds must be issued, as we will need to find private or other out of district options to educate our children.

Aubrey Parlet

First, any thought to having another town-hall meeting at a time that is NOT during normal business hours, so that working parents, who are likely going to be impacted, could actually attend? Hosting a meeting from 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. on a weekday, as opposed to an evening or weekend, seems to make it extremely hard for working parents to meaningfully participate...

Also, as a disclaimer, NONE of this is written from the perspective of not wanting my kids at home, or being focused on how much I, as an adult, am sacrificing for my kids. I adore having them at home. They adore each other. I'm trying to write this as objectively as possible, and trying to consider many factors including: the proposed 2-day plan not helping, and in some cases actually making exposure potential worse, practical considerations and questions, and educational concerns and questions for our youngest learners.

As a parent to an incoming kindergartener, with two other young children at home, our concerns are many. My spouse is a pediatrician, and I'm a lawyer, and we don't see how things are going to work with school being less than 5 days per week-- how is our child going to focus with younger siblings in the house? Will a FIVE year old be able to focus with e-learning? (We heard feedback that the e-learning for kindergarteners was very inconsistent, and quality was completely dependent on how tech savvy the individual teachers were.) Which one of us should stay home to be with our kindergartener? Which one of us will need to take time off from our careers (neither of us have jobs that are conducive to a "work from home" environment, my spouse needing to treat patients and me needing to meet with and represent clients in court). Should my spouse take time off? Spend only two days per week being a doctor? Is this helpful to our community at large, to cripple front line workers who have children (and there are many) and force them to make a choice between being doctors/nurses/other front line workers and the education of their little ones who are not equipped to learn remotely on their own? These are questions we are now confronted with. I've seen the feedback about the "ask" that is being made of educators-- to put their health in jeopardy-- but this is the same thing my spouse does EVERY SINGLE DAY for the sake of others. This is the same thing many parents do as essential workers. I don't want to undermine what is being asked of educators-- I think Covid-19 has shown everyone that they are our most valuable, and most underfunded (in some cases) resources as parents. However, I'm curious to know whether any of the following have been considered:

From a health perspective, if children are in school only two or three days per week-- that means they will be spending two to three days per week SOMEWHERE ELSE, with different care providers, tutors, small groups of children, potentially large groups of children, grandparents, relatives, friends, etc. This is INCREASING their potential exposure to Covid-19 and other illnesses, thereby INCREASING the potential exposure to teachers, when they return to school on days it is in session. I think there's an argument that this potential plan of limiting in-class time for elementary school students is worse, not just for parents and children, but educators alike, from a purely health-based exposure perspective.

Has any thought been given to the increased exposure that will actually occur from children needing to be "somewhere else" and "with other people" on the days school is not in session?

Has there been consideration given to the AAP recommendation (usually a very conservative group) about children under the age of 13 being physically present in the classroom as much as possible?

How is it that other neighboring suburbs, like Berwyn, have managed to figure out a five-day per week system with adequate safety measures? Is there a reason we can't duplicate in Oak Park?

If space is an issue-- has any thought been given to bringing in "trailers" for students that can be placed on the blacktop or fields? My kindergarten class was held in a trailer. It was amazing.

If e-learning is a part of the curriculum, will iPads or the equivalent be given to the students? Will the teachers practice with them in class, so that little kindergarteners can have some practice with the technology, in person, before having to dive into e-learning?

Are you going to extend the school year to make up for lost learning? Any thought to moving to a year-round school if students are only going to be there two days per week?

I sincerely hope that two days per week is not the actual "plan" for elementary school students this year-- because it works for no one, doesn't help exposure potential (and in fact will likely worsen exposure potential), cripples front-line workers, and takes away from the "school" experience we all hope to give our youngest learners-- it can't be done through a screen (nor is it recommended by those organizations, like the AAP, entrusted with making recommendations).

Thank you for reading. PLEASE reconsider, for the sake of our entire community. E-learning may work for older kids (and I wouldn't be writing this or feel at all upset if I had middle school or high schoolers, who had some sense of independence), but it does NOT work for elementary school students.

Mollie Hertel

I am the parent of two District 97 students (Hatch third and incoming Brooks sixth). I wanted to express my support for the return to in-person schooling in the fall and encourage the board to consult the most current scientific evidence and expert advice (ISBE and AAP) when making a determination on how many days of in-person instruction are recommended. The two day a week model does not seem to be supported by any of the latest scientific evidence and in fact, may lead to more exposure risk for many children whose parents have to seek out alternative arrangements for care. Also, the closure of schools for deep cleaning for a day is not supported by the most current evidence as we've gotten a clearer picture of how the virus is spread. I strongly urge the board to consider five days per week in-school instruction with guidelines (social distancing, masks, etc.)

I would also like to hear from the board about how you are planning to protect and support the teachers and other staff. For example, will teachers be given a choice on whether to conduct in-person instruction (regardless of the plan)? How will you be supporting teachers who are in the high-risk categories? Will the district be providing PPE and the supplies needed to maintain a safe classroom environment?

Jenna Leving Jacobson

Good afternoon, and thank you for all of your tireless work in the face of unprecedented challenges.

I understand the value of the questions posed by the survey for planning purposes, but I would have preferred asking those same families' opinions or comfort level in the event that there is a Covid-19 case

in their child's school or classroom. I'm certain your plans include contingencies to respond to an outbreak, but a planning survey should also survey responses to that inevitability.

I understand that the teachers' union is represented in the planning discussions, but were the individual District 97 teachers surveyed about their own comfort levels? Was the non-teaching staff surveyed? How much weight will be given to these responses versus the demands of parents? I suspect many families' views will be left out of the conversation; how will you account for this?

District 97's equity policy commits to eliminating racial inequities and systemic disparities. How will you ensure equitable learning opportunities for students who have been historically underserved? How will you ensure a plan constructed within a full equity lens?

Those who argue in favor of a full return to five-day-a week in-person school often cite the risks for students of color who are already harmed by the racism embedded in our education system, or mention the lower-income families who depend on meals, or even physical safety for children throughout the day. Remote education may indeed widen the opportunity gap for some students, or exacerbate risks for a child who is safer at school than they are at home. With deep appreciation for how difficult your job is at the moment, I humbly suggest that rather than referring to parent opinions when constructing a plan, you instead conduct a needs assessment so that the health and security of the most vulnerable are prioritized.

Because if this pandemic has taught us nothing, it has taught us that we are all connected (if not equally affected), and that our opinions really don't matter. We have to proceed in a way that is informed by epidemiology, and in the best interest for the whole community.

Michele Jurewicz

I have already submitted my family survey and provided verbal support in this tough process because it will be impossible to make everyone happy...

... but based on the lack of safety I just witnessed on the Beye playground by the summer program, I will not feel comfortable sending my children to school in the fall. The children are not wearing masks, and neither are the supervisors. No one is practicing social distancing with our masked family. It seems it may be impossible to manage a group of children in terms of keeping masks on, especially when the priority in the fall will be educating the group not just playing on the playground.

Covid-19 sucks for all of us.

Michelle Zavislak

I want to keep my comment/concern brief - What, if any training are teachers receiving in regards to maximizing remote teaching? Specifically with respect to learning the applications such as video conferencing like Zoom or Google Classroom (Sharing screen/Break Out sessions) - or other application that will help them present materials to the students remotely? Are instructions being given for both live remote learning as well as recorded classes and other out of band teaching techniques?

We have a daughter at Brooks who had 100 percent of her learning and assignments last spring were ONLY presented to her as written assignments, through Canvas. I feel her experience of 'remote learning' was typical of independent study. She could email to ask questions and a few of her teachers did weekly check-ins for social reasons, but she did not have any presentation of material from her teachers via video conferencing live or recorded. YouTube videos were sent to cover material but again, no video presentations. I think most kids in especially the middle schools, can navigate zoom meeting or google hangout links and would deeply benefit from more of a "feel" of a classroom environment. Perhaps that some teachers are / were not comfortable with the technology and that was a reason that option was not

provided. My understanding is all students in the middle school have Chrome Books and if needed the district has a program to provide Wi-Fi to those who don't already have it at home.

I realize there are difficulties around this - but many other schools are did this type of teaching during the 2019-2020 remote learning - even high schools, were kids were following their "schedule" and going to each class. Teachers are presenting materials to the class via video conferencing.

I appreciate that trying to navigate what the "right" thing to do for the 2020 school year is extremely difficult.

Larissa Leibowitz

Given it is generally accepted that transmission of Covid-19 is considerably lower in outdoor settings than indoor settings, consideration should be given to holding classes outdoors when possible. Perhaps if some classes are held outdoors it could increase the amount of time that children are at school.

Jenny Austin

District 97 should reopen the schools for in-person attendance five days a week for the 2020-2021 school year. The hybrid two-day a week model should be Plan B, not Plan A. The benefits and risks of reopening the schools cannot be analyzed in a Covid-bubble. Covid is a serious disease and life-threatening for many, but not for everyone who gets it. While many people around the world are working to find a vaccine or other ways to lessen the risk as fast as possible, it may be years before there is a vaccine and an adequate supply for everyone.

In-person attendance is what is best for the students, even in the current environment. Remote learning fails to meet the needs of the students. Students do not receive an appropriate public education, nor are their social and mental needs met while remote learning. I watched with dismay this spring as my first grader spiraled into a depressed state because of remote learning, which worsened with each Zoom classroom meeting. Students do not participate in the same manner in remote learning, nor do teachers engage students in remote learning. My first grader learned nothing from the remote learning offered by District 97 in the last three months of the 2019-2020 school year.

As you are aware, experts around the country recommend that children go back to school. There have been no outbreaks tied to schools in any country where students have returned to school nor have any outbreaks been tied to daycares in our region that remained open or have reopened.

Parents cannot be expected to be teachers. Many families in this community have two-working parents. Many families do not have childcare or teachers or tutors on staff at home to teach. Many families do not have the flexibility to not work during the day in order to teach their kids. Many employers do not have the ability to be flexible either. My husband and I both worked from home this spring and frequently more than 70 hours a week. We simply do not have the bandwidth or the capability to be both working professional and teacher again. Our careers pay the exorbitant Oak Park taxes to send our children to good schools, not to stare at screens.

If students are in school five days a week, there are fewer opportunities for them and, in turn, for their teachers and school staff, to be exposed to Covid-19. If instead students are in school for only two days a week, this means that there are three weekdays where the school cannot control the variables, and the kids may be around many different people. To think that the kids will remain home these three days a week ignores modern day reality.

District 97 should do what other schools and day cares around the world are doing – require students to wear masks and check temperatures at the beginning of the day. Many families have expanded their

“bubble” to include another family so the kids can play – find out who has and group these kids together. Kids are getting comfortable wearing a mask – to go to the park, to be around friends, to go anywhere. Asking a kid to wear a mask is not asking a lot of them.

If the hybrid model is adopted, then District 97 needs to have a fully developed plan to get our children back in school five days a week as soon as possible. District 97 also needs to have plans for the three days a week that the children are not in school. The region is not shut down as it was this spring, and parents cannot be expected to be home to care for the kids and to play teacher these three days. If District 97 decides that kids should not be in school, then consider keeping the kids in this year’s classes the same as last year’s classes so that at least there’s some continuity and familiarity.

Kids belong in school five days a week. Staring at a screen is not “in school.” Waiting for a vaccine and then for everyone to be vaccinated before sending the kids back to school is not the right answer.

Kate Odom

I would like a response to the below comments, at minimum in the manner as is laid out in the board responsibilities, procedures and protocols.

For the purpose of transparency, trust, communication and honesty, I ask that "the Board" facilitate a Town Hall structured meeting, open to the public where families can engage in meaningful discussion regarding planning for the 2020-2021 school year. As stated in District 97 Board of Education Responsibilities, Procedures and Protocols, two primary goals of the board meetings are "Promote transparency and accountability" and "Identify additional opportunities for the board and administration to participate in non-board meeting activities that will help strengthen relationships with stakeholders". I believe holding a town hall where the board actually participates in communication directly with the families they serve is imperative to meeting these goals. I understand that the survey was sent out trying to elicit public comment. However, I found the wording of the survey to be convoluted and confusing. It is likely that the findings will be presented in such a way to justify decisions being made without adequate transparency and accountability. Furthermore, the board has lost the trust needed to ensure that families' choices are not being restricted due to the boards' fear of litigation and money-based decision making. It is paramount that students be in the classroom MORE than they are out of the classroom, and that they are provided direct (in-person) instruction from their teachers in order to promote individualized and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities.

Finally, I appreciate the time and efforts given by the board members and hope they can strive to better meet their obligation and duty to the students of District 97 by ensuring all students are provided the high quality education that Oak Park residents pay for in their taxes. Remembering the long term impacts of missed instruction time and the profound impact of prolonged exposure to screens on neurological development of youth.

Dan Mahoney Sr.

I am a parent of 11 year old twins who, after five years, are moving on from William Hatch Elementary to Gwendolyn Brooks Middle school for sixth grade in the fall.

I want to be the record that I am in absolute opposition to ANY plan that includes “hybrid learning”. In fact, I am in full favor of the kids returning to school full time in the fall.

I have studied all sides of this issue thoroughly and no matter how hard I try, I cannot follow the logic of implementing a “hybrid plan”.

First of all, regardless if the school is open two days, four days, or five days, at some point all of the same people are still in the same buildings. Is the virus somehow less contagious on certain days? Clean the schools all you want, it is still all the same people breathing the same air. It's an airborne virus! Make everyone wear masks and spread out the desks. Seems like a no brainer to me.

Second, having been through the in home remote learning process along with the rest of the parents, I can say with ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY that the level of learning, teaching and social growth pales severely to the academic education and social growth the children received when physically attending class on a daily basis. This hybrid concept will do nothing but set our children back even further, especially as schools around this state and others, move forward with a full time schedule. On this note, if the district believes otherwise, than you, our district officials are either kidding yourselves, or completely ignorant to the reality of how "the remote learning" program actually works.

Third, there is the obvious Issue of child care that would need to be addressed. When we were all home in the spring, this may have been a lesser issue. However, with things opening back up now and parents finally getting back to work, they (we) will now all have to spend additional money on child care just as we are beginning to get back on our feet again, putting many families in nothing short of an impossible situation

My questions:

1. Will all district officials agree to give a portion of their six figure salaries, to the parents who will be forced to either pay for child care, or take several days off from work every week to do the districts (YOUR) job of educating OUR kids?
2. Will you please explain to everyone why you feel it is so important for Oak Park District 97 to completely disregard both the recommendations of The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Illinois State Board of Education?

My suggestion: Stop putting political correctness, the fear mongering from teachers union officials and political ideologies disguised as concern for the community ahead of THE EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS AND WELL BEING OF THE CHILDREN. It's embarrassing, it's pathetic and well... it is just plain wrong.

If you pass this hybrid plan.... You will most certainly prove our point that your politics and political correctness far outweigh your concern for our children.

If your top priority is TRULY the education, and wellbeing of the students of District 97 (which by the way is your duty and obligation), then It's time for you to stand up and quit hiding behind your political agendas and do the right thing. It's easy to do. You just have to show the courage and conviction to STAND UP FOR THE CHILDREN by fully re-opening the schools this fall. Anything less will not only constitute a complete lack of leadership and dereliction of duty, but more importantly, a complete lack principle and personal responsibility.

In conclusion, please ask yourselves one more time... Who really comes first in this decision? And remember, your answer will be blatantly obvious.

Lisa Peloquin

As you consider the plan for the 2020-21 School Year, I encourage you to remember that Lincoln continues to be in a state of crisis and requires your special attention. While some problems have been put on hold during the pandemic, the leadership challenges and toxic climate among the adults at Lincoln

continues to worsen. It might be easier to only focus on the needs of the entire district during this difficult time, and return to thinking about Lincoln down the road, but the students and teachers at Lincoln have already waited far too long for appropriate support.

Of course, not all of our students are equally impacted by the lack of leadership and the toxic climate- it dispositionally impacts students' who already face other challenges. We have heard from parents of children with special needs that are being unmet because of this leadership crisis. If we are a district committed to walking the walk of equity, then as a board you must prioritize supporting Lincoln by getting multiple proposals from experts in school climate reform and leadership to support Lincoln immediately. We are counting on you to select experts that are up to all the challenges Lincoln faces - from the toxic climate to remote learning support. Please do not walk away from this responsibility thinking that our superintendent is addressing it. It appears she has moved on to other things.

The 2020-21 School Year will be difficult for teachers all over the country, let us commit to lessening the challenge for the teachers and students at Lincoln. Instead of allowing the climate problems to continue to fester and grow, bringing in a third party to recreate the climate at Lincoln will support teachers to collaborate and pave the way for lasting thoughtful leadership. Our students and their teachers have waited for years for us to address these challenges. Students entering 4th grade this year will have had a different principal every fall. We must do better.

I request a response to this email to let me know your progress in getting proposals from experts in school reform to support Lincoln, your criteria in selecting the group to work with, and your timeframe.

Mara Maas

As the district begins to finalize plans for the fall, I hope the superintendent and board will consider the following:

Our current knowledge of Covid-19 indicates that children are less like to get infected, become seriously ill, and spread this virus to others. They are not super spreaders. Schools around the world have reopened without causing significant increases in cases in communities. It is possible to reopen schools safely for our children, District 97 teachers and staff, and our community.

We need to acknowledge that there is no guarantee of a safe, effective, widely available vaccine during this school year or ever. If the district decides our schools are not ready for full in person learning, then we need to start working now to make them ready as soon as possible. This virus could circulate in our community for years.

Teachers and staff should receive thorough and accurate education about Covid-19. I see a great deal of misinformation on social media and hear it from parents in my office. Teachers need to know what the real risks are and aren't before they make any decisions on what they are comfortable with this fall.

Anything other than full in person learning will widen the achievement gap and disadvantage our most vulnerable students. How will the district address this? We have heard that there are plans for a partnership with the park district so remote learners have a safe place to be. How will they actually learn there?

The ISBE guidelines clearly indicate that full in person learning should be our goal. I believe that our district has the space, personnel, and community resources to make this happen in a way that follows health and safety guidance.

I know this is challenging, but it is also incredibly important work. Thank you all for your time and effort.

Cheryl Bourelly

This comment is based on preliminary information obtained at the conclusion of the parent committee meeting last week. I have two elementary aged children that attend Hatch and I am not in favor of a hybrid classroom experience for the 2020-21 school year. With that said I do believe the safety and well-being of our children are the priority however, without adequate data it remains difficult to make decisions based on theory and projections. The hybrid model does not seem sound due to its inherent flux. Having children in school two to three days out of the week does not mitigate the overall presumed risk that the hybrid is thought to curtail. The risk of exposure still looms, if you are present any day of the week and someone tests positive you are at risk for exposure; hence contact tracing. Data demonstrates that certain behaviors lessen the viral burden and propensity to spread the virus. If children are provided shorter hours at school say eight to noon, omit ancillary activities, provide daily deep school cleanings through a specialized company this could potentially curb the need for uprooting the entire model of education. In addition, it would boost the economy through job creation and employment. I fully support exploring measures to keep our community safe and I am hopeful as a taxpayer that the decision made is in the best interest of the health and social well-being of the staff and students of District 97 based on accessible and evidence-based data.

Nichole Oswald

This is my children's first year with the district (attending kindergarten and first grades), previously they attended Intercultural Montessori in Oak Park. I myself am an essential worker and have been working in my office throughout the pandemic.

My children completed eLearning within the Intercultural community so while I cannot speak from direct experience with District 97, I can speak as a single working mother who had to juggle working full-time in-person, while also taking on the role of teacher and child care provider to my two young children. I can assure you that those two and a half months were some of the hardest months for myself and my children. Add the stress of managing residential real estate into the mix and let's just say I am glad they are no longer in school. While I have full faith that the District has put significant thought into improving an experience that was unexpectedly thrust upon all of us, I do NOT have full faith in the ability of my children (and many other children) to learn, grow, develop, and socially mature as they should, and they would if the instruction were to resume in person. Not only that but if the district opts to either do a hybrid model or eLearning for all instruction in the fall, I (as will many other parents) will be placed in a position of significant financial hardship deciding if they should quit their jobs, hire private help, etc. What about families that simply cannot afford these things? What are their options?

It is disconcerting to me that there are no other options being considered. Obviously I am aware that cost and logistics are a factor. Believe me, I manage a team of 40 essential employees and these last 4 months have been a constant game of pivoting, new policies, revising policies, etc. However, when we are speaking about our children, the future of our community, I would expect more unconventional suggestions being put forth for discussion. For example, would we be able to partner with a University to have access to Undergraduate Education majors to assist with instruction (teaming them with a teacher in the event of illness, etc.)? Could we do split days (am and pm shift)? I went to St. Charles East High School in St. Charles, IL, and during my junior year the school was shut down due to mold. The district pivoted and did split shifts with the other high school in the town which allowed all students to graduate on time. Could we do cohorts of smaller groups of mixed ages (geographically similar to keep logistics easier) so that sanitizing is less of an issue? How about trailers - many schools use trailers when space becomes a problem in older buildings. How about transitioning to year-round schooling, which has been proven to benefit students? I can speak from experience on year-round schooling, as I attended a school that went year-round.

All of these ideas are ones that I would expect to see presented by members of the board to show that every effort is being made to have in-person instruction resume while minimizing risks to all (teachers, support staff, and students) as much as possible. I am hopeful that we as a community can rally around our teachers and students to minimize risk, provide as much support to parents, and provide some normalcy to return within our community. If CPS has announced a return to in-person instruction, why is District 97 unable to?

Dan McLaughlin

I have two kids who are District 97 students. Like everyone, I have serious concerns about the pandemic and the risks and unknowns that come along with it.

Much of the focus has been on the risks of infection from Covid-19, but I feel that those understandable concerns have crowded out the District's consideration of the consequences of keeping kids separated from school (and in-school learning) for an extended period of time.

There is considerable evidence to support the conclusion that keeping kids at home will do harm that outweighs the risk that comes with returning them to full-time, in-person school. District 97 has the resources to protect students, teachers, staff, and families. It needs to use them.

I also want to emphasize that the negative impact of "remote learning" is disproportionate-- kids with parents/caretakers who are not fortunate enough to have flexible work schedules will not get the support and oversight they need to get any benefit from Zoom meetings and online lessons. Kids with IEPs are left without the vital support they need-- during these all-important early years of their education-- and are instead left to be taught by parents/caretakers who have none of the specialized training or knowledge required. These kids are getting left behind, and that's shameful. The District has a responsibility to do better than default back into a program that is similar to what we all experienced in the spring.

Then, it was excusable. Everyone was caught unprepared and we all had to figure it out on the fly. Now, there has been time to prepare for a return to school and the kids of District 97 deserve a good plan that will get them back in the classroom.

Ceci Sieloff

Please think of the safety of our teachers and children. Remote learning for next school year will keep most safer. Children will not do great with wearing masks at school while not next to parents. You can't tag yet another responsibility onto teachers. Proof: See parks today. No masks.

Jennifer Brauer

I'm writing to thank and recognize Michael Cruz Hatch Elementary and Josh Hancock at Irving Elementary on their support for the American Heart Association through the Kids Heart Challenge program at their schools this year.

This program is designed to teach students in a memorable and fun way how to stay heart healthy not only physically but mentally too. Both Josh and Michael do a tremendous job instilling these habits in their students with this program. It is clear they are very passionate about the health and wellness of their students and we love seeing this come to life each year at their schools.

Not only do Josh and Michael teach their students to be healthy but they reiterate the importance of helping others, and offer an outlet for donations to the American Heart Association to go towards advancement in cardiovascular research, local hospitals to provide guidelines for the best care, advocacy efforts and more.

While donations are not required to participate in the program, these two school communities still raised a total of \$6,696 to fight our nation's leading cause of death, heart disease.

We are inspired and we are grateful for both the work these two educators do, but also the support of the entire school communities at Irving and Hatch. Now more than ever education on staying heart healthy is so very important to keep hearts strong with Covid-19 present. Additionally, the AHA has been helping to fund research on Covid-19 and heart disease.

We know that heart disease affects so many, and while we know next year will look different, we will continue to support your schools with resources!!

Cara Carmody

If you offer only remote learning for the fall or even a hybrid model, how will you provide for students who absolutely can't do remote learning or for those who refuse to do it? Will you allow them to fail? What about students with zero support at home who do not log in, will you allow them to fail? How will teachers accurately access students from a computer screen? I would like a reply/ answer to these questions.

Jesse Hathaway

A child's attendance at school is a vital bulwark against the yawning chasm of inequity which separates the children within our community. Closing this chasm is extremely difficult in elementary school, and nearly impossible afterwards. The district has been vocal as a purported champion of the black, brown, underprivileged, and special education students in our community. To demonstrate their conviction the district should bring all children of elementary age back to school in the fall. The safe way to accomplish this would be to repurpose the Julian and Brooks middle schools as elementary schools. The additional space of the two middle schools will enable the district to provide adequate social distancing while also prioritizing in person learning for our youngest students.

Sean Flynn

I wanted to state for the record a few points in regards to the upcoming school year; I apologize in advance if anything is repetitive to what has been said by other commenters.

As the district seeks safe ways to get our elementary school children back in the classroom, I ask that our leaders think creatively about solving these problems.

Please ensure you are getting the most out of the ample space in both our schools and the community at large. Beyond the existing classrooms in our schools, there are gyms, auditoriums, art rooms, lunchrooms and libraries whose traditional use will either be curtailed or eliminated this year. Beyond that in our community are other places with space that could be used in this crisis as temporary homeroom locations. We know District 97 and the Park District have talked about partnering during the school year for child care, but why could not the Park District of Oak Park (PDOP) space be used for classrooms? Anderson, Barrie, Fox, Longfellow and Stevenson parks, Ridgeland Common and the OP Conservatory are all PDOP facilities that have indoor classroom space. What about the Dole or Maze branches of the library? What about the district administration building?

If there must be remote schooling again, then the solution must be equitable. My dual-income household is most certainly on the fortunate side of things here, with the means to support our kids beyond what our government provides, but in four months we have seen the equity gap widen deeply in the District 97 community and it has been very worrisome. The wellbeing of our children is at stake. If there is a plan to learn remotely and provide child-care options when students are not in school, then it must be available to all students at no or limited cost, regardless of means.

Marshae Terry

Understanding the need to return to a structured educational setting, it is also equally as important that our educational leaders consider the potential implications and potential consequences that come with a premature return. Some of the children assigned to District 97 schools belong to families who are unable to afford alternative childcare or are not afforded the opportunity to work remotely and remain safe at home for themselves or their child(ren).

Those same families who must work and depend on the school as their source of childcare will undoubtedly and out of sheer necessity send their child(ren) to school with known and possibly unknown symptoms, which then places numerous other children and staff at risk of becoming ill and they in turn bring the virus back home and out to our communities, compromised family members and others.

There are no guarantees for me that have been presented that ease my fears or convince me that District 97 is ready to safely return to in person instruction. Our children, MY CHILD and our teachers are not a science project and should not be guinea pigs to test out theories about reopening before time. This is a big risk and I'm sure no one is going to be able to tell me anything but we're sorry should my child fall ill to the virus contracted from school.

I am sure that I am not alone in hoping that there are other alternatives being sought for those families like mine who are uneasy, fearful and deeply concerned for the return of school. Could there be a way for my child (and others who wish and are able) to be inclusive without being included. For example, could he be allowed to remote in via a virtual platform and work from home, while following along with the class? For those unable to have access to virtual platforms, can the district provide technology resources to assist?

I urge the board to carefully consider the argument and err on the side of safety for the ones who matter most, our children.

Elizabeth Thompson

As I know the board is aware, I fully support children having a full return to learning in August. The Illinois State Board of Education and American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines are clear. Kids need to be back in school and they provide guidance to reopen schools that is based on science and current data from around the world.

The hybrid model poses difficulties for families who need to work, increases the mixing of cohorts of children and increases the equity gap in education.

Neighboring districts, most recently including River Forest are going back. Has Oak Park been closely looking at their plans and models?

We have been told the district is "partnering" with the park district to provide childcare- I have heard based on the numbers the park district could only support about 10% of the district needs. So where else is the school district looking to support families left without care for their children? And how would these places support e-learning? Without a plan to support e-learning, the students who are using these plans would miss out on 60 percent of their education.

Has there been teacher education provided? Who is providing this education? I am very concerned about the level of anxiety our teachers are feeling and feel they deserve a forum to get fact-based information, to be able to ask questions that address their concerns. I have been offering education for the teachers that include a panel of professionals in infectious disease, epidemiology, school psychology, etc. but I have received no response to my emails in regards to this matter.

I feel that there needs to be much better transparency and working together between the district, the teachers union, the parents, and the teachers as individuals. Our kids deserve a return to in person learning and a commitment from our community to do our best to support this school year.

Franny Ritchie

I was extremely disappointed to hear that the District is planning a hybrid model for AY 20-21. I think that a hybrid model of learning is the worst of both worlds and that, assuming Illinois remains in Phase 4, a failure to return to full-time in-person learning would be a mistake on multiple axes. It provides little in the way of infection control and little in terms of learning. In order to keep my comments as cogent as possible, I've numbered them below.

1. As a practical matter, in a hybrid model, students will be in all manner of childcare situations on the days they are not in school, dramatically increasing the risk to staff and to each other. I don't believe that a hybrid model provides any meaningful assurance of safety or disease prevention vs. full-time instruction, since a hybrid model ensures that students will be mixing with children from other classes and schools during their off-days.

2. I am deeply concerned about the equity implications: wealthier students will end up in childcare situations that are safe and enriching, whereas economically marginalized children will end up in far more tenuous situations with careers less likely to have access to internet and remote learning tools and devices to enable remote learning. That the District is comfortable with the extent to which this will exacerbate existing inequalities is unconscionable to me. I also question the efficacy of remote learning, especially for small children. I am extremely skeptical that a teacher can provide a meaningful remote learning experience while also providing a meaningful in-person learning experience for the other half of the class.

3. My child's teacher did an admirable job pivoting to remote learning, and I understand that the District is continuing to work to make improvements; I further realize that there is likely to be a second wave at some point in the future during which full-time remote learning will be necessary again. However, in August (assuming cases are steady and Illinois persists in Phase four), I feel that the District needs to begin as it intends to go on. There is no certainty about when a vaccine will become available, and Illinois is currently as open as the state will get until a vaccine is discovered. Is there a plan to transition out of hybrid learning after a certain period of time? What is it? If a vaccine takes several years to develop, the District cannot plan to do hybrid learning for the duration. That is not fair to anyone, but there was no information about an expiration date or a plan to re-assess the hybrid model in the materials that have been shared (or leaked) thus far.

4. Neighboring districts are currently planning to go back full-time, including the City of Chicago, Forest Park, Catholic schools across the state, and a number of independent schools in the Western Suburbs, surely there is an opportunity to share information and emerging best practices. Additionally, those students who can will flee this District: my family is considering whether we could enroll my child in private education or find an alternate, full-time arrangement for them. Anecdotally, other parents are doing the same. Under normal circumstances, I look at families who live in Oak Park and pay for private education in puzzlement, but in these extreme circumstances I think that the district will see an exodus of wealthy families and will be left as the option of last resort – which again undermines the premise and the promise of public education.

5. A hybrid model of school absolutely does not work for working parents. As the last four months has shown, the onus to manage remote learning and childcare has fallen disproportionately on mothers, whether they work or not, and a hybrid model would deepen this gendered division of labor, hobbling women's careers for the foreseeable future. Even in households where labor is split down the middle, parents cannot meaningfully care for children three days a week while working two full-time jobs. I

currently only have one child in District 97, but I have smaller children who may be in kindergarten before a virus is available. There is no way for me to manage a day of remote learning, though my somewhat flexible job means that I am probably in a better spot than many. Just as it is unreasonable to expect teachers to address the needs of in-person and online students simultaneously, it is unfair to ask parents to supervise three days of their children's education.

6. Finally, the ISBE guidelines stated that getting children back to school was the priority - a stance echoed by Dr. Fauci and the American Academy of Pediatrics. The guidelines stated that schools should open even if they had to sacrifice six feet of physical distancing. Given the timing of the ISBE guidelines' release and the timing of the District 97 stakeholder meeting when the hybrid model was announced, it does not seem like the most recent recommendations have been fully taken into account.

I feel extremely passionately that a hybrid model would be disastrous for District 97 students and for Oak Park writ large, especially when so many other schools are finding a way to plan for full-time education. School is essential, and teachers are essential workers. I appreciate the concerns for staff safety and do not intend to be cavalier about the adjustments that will need to be made, but I do feel that defaulting to a hybrid model is an unacceptable proposal for teachers, parents and students.

Finally, there are opportunities for mitigating risk that I did not see reflected in the survey: incorporating things like extended recess; outdoor learning; opening windows; masking policies; bubbling or creating 'pods' for middle schoolers (vs. traditional class-switching) and other similar accommodations could substantially mitigate the risk and make a return to school a much more viable prospect for everyone. Outdoor learning in particular is a model that other countries, who have prioritized schools over bars, have implemented over the summer.

Neil Lane

Please discuss what steps will be taken to dramatically improve the teacher time and involvement in day-to-day instruction during remote learning days, compared to last spring. Last spring was primarily open teacher-student zoom calls in addition to homework. Will instruction live streaming be added?

Shana Tchafina

In regards to the District 97 Board of Education's Special Meeting on Fall 2020 Planning, please consider providing options to parents who wish to keep their child(ren) enrolled at District 97 schools but who do not feel comfortable sending their child(ren) to in-person class settings until broader regional control of the pandemic is obtained. For example, promise no penalties and ensure optimal resources to households who prefer that their child(ren) participate remotely this fall 2020.

Sally Ziegler

Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to our children and the community. I am a parent of a District 97 student as well as an educator. I know there are a lot of difficult decisions to be made about school this fall, but I strongly feel that the hybrid model is the worst option for our kids. This means that families are expected to find childcare on days they don't have school, which is extremely expensive, as well as take the risk of sending kids to school. On the days children don't have school, Parents will be forced to piece meal childcare together or send their kids to community programs. At these programs kids will again be exposed to other children. If it's safe to go back to school, then having all kids in school every day seems like the safest choice. Children could have specials and lunch in their classrooms and only be around the children in their home rooms. This seems like the least exposure for kids as well as the most equitable in terms of expenses.

Heather Guido

Substitute teachers:

1. How will you screen for Covid-19 (or keep subs "close" and part of the classroom cohort) to prevent them from bringing the virus into the classroom from other places as they hop from job to job?
2. What are the plans for boosting the sub pool? Could sub pay be doubled during Covid-19? I think few will sub during Covid-19 for \$100/day. There is too much added risk and stress around Covid-19.
3. What are the plans for training subs (at the same level as teachers) on Covid-19 measures in the classroom?
4. How will a sub be supported in the Covid-19 classroom? Could there be 2 adults in the classroom on sub days - one to manage Covid-19 behaviors and measures and one to get through the teacher's material? I can't imagine how hard it will be to be a sub during Covid-19; nearly impossible to manage Covid-19 measures, classroom management, and teach.

Maybe teachers need an aide during Covid-19 to handle Covid-19 measures. Give the aide a full time job - they are then part of the "cohort." Then, when teacher is out, that aide can take over as sub and the students know them (and she/he knows teacher's Covid-19 precaution "ways".) This helps keep circle of adults in contact with kids (and teacher) smaller, too.

(Full disclosure - I was a sub last fall until I started working in my profession. I don't have plans to return to subbing. Also, I noticed a lot of subs are minorities. They may be at higher risk of contracting the virus.)

Are special measures being considered to modify the ventilation systems in school buildings? If so, what are the options being considered?

Eric Friedman

We are in challenging times, and I appreciate the efforts that the District 97 Board and Administration are going through to plan for this fall. It will not be possible to please everyone. However, returning to school two days a week is a worst-of-all-worlds compromise. Compared to sending students to school five days a week, a two-day hybrid plan would hurt educational outcomes without producing better health outcomes.

Why would health outcomes be worse if kids go to school two days instead of five?

If kids go to school only two days a week, what would they do the other three? Some would remain sheltered-in-place, but not all. Many would be around other people, such as those in day care or watched by grandparents or neighbors. This would not only increase the likelihood that these kids get the virus, but also the likelihood that they bring it back to schools and spread it around the community. This is probably among the reasons why the experience in other countries is that reopening schools doesn't increase the viral spread.

What would happen to educational outcomes if kids go to school only two days?

Remote schooling did not work well for most families last spring. Returning to school two days a week might work fine for some kids, such as:

- Those in both cohorts, who would go to school four days a week
- Those with parents available to lead remote schooling (and good at it)
- Those with parents with the money to hire private tutors--this will happen for many, as there are a lot of unemployed recent college graduates. Expect the wealthiest families to find the most skilled tutors.

For the remainder of students, expect educational outcomes to be terrible and inequitable.

Conclusion

Some people may feel like returning to school two days a week is a good compromise, but this is in optics alone. There's little evidence it will produce better health outcomes, but it will definitely produce worse, less equitable educational outcomes. Instead, we should send our kids to school five days a week using health precautions that have proven effective in other countries that have reopened schools.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts for our community.

Kim West

I wanted to send a note to emphasize my support for a hybrid model for returning to school in the fall. I am a single parent of a fifth grader and I work full time. While it will be challenging for me personally to coordinate additional child care and/or support my child with remote learning in a hybrid model, I am willing to do this out of concern for my child and my family's health. Covid-19 has had a devastating effect on members of the African American community (of which my family and I are members) and I think any decision by this board should take the potential impact to all members of District 97 into consideration. I am concerned that a full-time return in the fall would be too soon and I think it would be hard to implement sufficient safety precautions with younger children. I understand that many believe the impact/risk of Covid-19 on children is low, but there is a lot that is still unknown about this virus. So I think a hybrid model is the more cautious and prudent approach given the circumstances.

Emma Liechty

I am writing to express my strong support for a full-time return to on-site schooling in District 97 this fall. Primary reasons include equitable access to education, support of working families, and social/emotional health of children. I believe we can support the members of this district while still reducing (though not eliminating) overall risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission.

In particular, I would like to draw attention to the following excerpt from the American Academy of Pediatrics Covid-19 Guidance for School Re-entry. This document states "SARS-CoV-2 appears to behave differently in children and adolescents than other common respiratory viruses, such as influenza, on which much of the current guidance regarding school closures is based. Although children and adolescents play a major role in amplifying influenza outbreaks, to date, this does not appear to be the case with SARS-CoV-2. Although many questions remain, the preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from SARS-CoV-2 infection. In addition, children may be less likely to become infected and to spread infection. Policies to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 within schools must be balanced with the known harms to children, adolescents, families, and the community by keeping children at home."

I encourage the school board to seek repeated guidance from pediatricians, epidemiologists, and public health experts within our community, both before and during the next academic year. County level risk metrics from the Illinois Department of Public Health suggest that new case rate, mortalities and test positivity rates are stable and within target ranges for Cook County. At this time, I believe that the benefits of full time in person school far outweigh the risks and encourage the school board to allocate the resources necessary for support of this in fall 2020.

Shayla Bell

I understand that a hybrid model is being considered for the upcoming school year. I support this approach strongly and ask that it strongly prioritizes the needs of:

- Students with food and/or housing insecurity
- Students with special educational needs such as IEPs/504 plans
- Students whose guardians are essential workers/cannot work from home

Serena Moore

1. Will you address the protocols that will be in place if someone in the district contracts the virus?
2. What is the district's infection rate threshold to determine if a school(s) should close?

Sarah Manongdo-Joya

I am a parent of a rising 5th grader at Lincoln Elementary, and a preschooler at Oak Park Montessori.

I filled out the survey monkey, here's some ideas I put in the comments at the end.... (I am a parent of rising fifth grader, he prefers in person but I think we need to give more of that option to the younger kiddos).

I prefer full five day in person learning for younger grades K-3 with option to zoom in real time for participation for those who want to stay home. Younger kids cannot e-learn successfully. Then five day remote learning for grades four - five with option to have in person learning (small classroom of 10 each) for those who cannot do remote learning. Convert grades four - five classrooms into additional Kindergarten – third grade classrooms so each classroom only has about ten kids. Hire teachers' aides one per main teacher so the teacher has 10 and the aide has 10 students. Keep the class groupings the same from 2019-2020 and move students up a grade level together so there's familiarity especially for remote learning. Convert cafeteria and gym to classroom spaces. No hot lunch, everyone brings their own and eat in the classroom. Teachers need to be provided KN95 masks or surgical masks at the minimum. Teachers who do not want to return to in person teaching should be offered a chance to teach remotely the older grades. Staggered drop off and pick up times in the morning / afternoon to prevent cluster / overcrowding. Temperature checks upon entrance and masks for all. Disinfection protocols and training needed for all school personnel. Consistent communication with parents is vital.

Julia Pryce

I have two questions as it relates to remote learning, should that take place, this fall. The first is whether the district will be able to make project-based learning possible. In the spring, my first grader primarily completed math worksheets, and quickly became disillusioned by school. Second, can remote learning include structured opportunity for meaningful peer interactions and an opportunity for extra curriculars, such as physical education and music? We missed all of these things in spring.

Martha Payne

I am writing to urge District 97 adopt a full time return to school plan for the 2020-2021 academic school year, a plan based on the latest research on the impact of Covid-19 on children and educators. Many private schools in the area have already committed time and resources to ensure safe full time return plans. Given the resources available to District 97, it's unacceptable that the district is unable to figure out a solution that work.

Question 1: There are schooling models that have proven successful since Covid-19. What models is the District reviewing for adoption (ex YMCA)? What specialists has the district engaged to implement modifications based on Oak Park's specific needs (i.e. healthy buildings expert (see attached) or Lurie's epidemiologists)?

Question 2: Many families cannot manage remote learning (i.e. homeschool) while working. Assuming you release class rosters and allow families to begin to form cohorts, what happens to kids with challenging behavior or learning needs? What about families that lack the time and other resources to contribute to the cohort (time, English language barriers, housing needs). I assume most cohorts won't be eager to invite these children in further widening the achievement gap. What is the district doing to ensure remote learning doesn't result in exacerbating the achievement gap?

Sarah Miller

In person learning for those under 13 is essential in the growth and learning of our children. I understand that a five day school week is not feasible.

Remote or e-learning needs to be led by teachers who are actively teaching. Not relying on parents to fully teach their kids as we not educators.

There needs to be free care for those kids on the days they are not in school.

Fabian Wyss

As schools reopen under guidelines of the phase four Restore Illinois plan we see different plans per school district. An example is the plan for District 25 Arlington Heights outlined in this video: <https://youtu.be/JX9Lp5D8Gy8> . Could you please contrast your plan with the District 25 plan and explain why a plan similar to the D25 one is not possible for Oak Park? I think that the District 25 plan is reasonable, safe and just as it minimizes the impact on families and children by allowing a fulltime return back to school as recommended by Governor Pritzker.

Matthew Downs

Are the risks to the lives of students and staff less important than in person teaching?

The following comments was received, but not read aloud during the board meeting.

Laura Lentino

I am the spouse of a District 97 teacher. I am contacting you today to ask that you vote to continue with e-learning, exclusively, until a vaccine or cure for Covid-19 becomes available. Some of you may already be of this opinion; others may not. Perhaps for a moment you can put yourself into my shoes and consider how YOU would feel if your spouse contracted Covid-19 because of exposure to the virus in their workplace. Can you imagine how fearful you might be, not knowing how the virus would affect your spouse? Can you imagine the anxiety of not knowing whether your spouse would end up in the hospital, possibly requiring life-saving intubation that may or may not save your spouse's life? Can you imagine how you would feel if the last time you saw your spouse was when you or an ambulance brought your spouse to the hospital? Can you imagine the anguish of seeing your spouse die via a Facetime conversation with their nurse or doctor? Can you imagine having to break the news to your young children that their Mommy or Daddy was not coming back? These are the terrible thoughts that I have been tortured with since the first day of summer vacation. It is not a stretch to say that any of these God-awful possibilities could happen to my spouse, to my children, to my elderly Mother, for whom I provide care, to me, or to any other member of the faculty and staff of District 97. Indeed, Covid-19 has already claimed the lives of over 130,000 Americans in only five months. One hundred and thirty thousand Americans! This disease is no joke; Covid-19 is a very dangerous virus. It does not discriminate. It kills people of all ages. Until a vaccine or a cure becomes available, the safest and most prudent option is to continue with e-learning. I sincerely hope that you agree and will decide to continue with e-learning. The health and safety of students AND staff should be the driving factor in this crucial life-and-death decision. I will leave you with this final thought: if you vote to bring the students and staff back to school, and God forbid one of them contracts Covid-19 as a direct result from being exposed to the virus at school, and subsequently dies, could you live with that for the rest of your life, knowing that had you voted to keep students and staff at home that person would still be alive? That is one weight I would never want to bear.

ADJOURNMENT

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There being no further business to conduct, President Broy declared the meeting adjourned at 11:32 p.m.

Board President

Board Secretary