

Woodbridge Board Of Education Members,

My name is Nicole Chick and I live at 38 Deer Run Road. I have twins at Beecher who are entering year four in the MAG program and I am a Kindergarten teacher at Beecher Road School.

Thank you for providing an opportunity for public comment last Wednesday and this evening. It is evident that we all have strong feelings and opinions about reopening school in a few short weeks and it is important to be and feel heard. The Kindergarten team wrote a follow up letter for this meeting providing more insight to what in-person learning would look like in the fall. I will touch upon that briefly tonight, so I encourage you and all parents to read our letter and the other teacher submissions. I will also voice concerns I have about reopening schools from a parent perspective.

The Kindergarten team at Beecher has always worked tirelessly to provide a warm and welcoming environment for our students as they enter public school for the first time. Academics are rigorous, but we also know children learn best through play, which we have fought hard to keep in our curriculum and daily schedule. So much of the play and social interaction will be gone with the CDC guidelines. We go into great detail in our team letter, but one aspect of the recommendations I want to highlight is that we would become the front line providers of these guidelines. Therefore, it is our responsibility to remind and redirect four and five year olds to not play with their masks and to keep distance from other children- when all their instincts are telling them to do is to get closer to each other in order to make connections to their peers. ***I will be discouraging all the things that I would normally be encouraging.*** This is not only heartbreaking to myself as an educator, it will also be very confusing and stressful for the children. They are already in a new environment without their caregivers for the first time, which is overwhelming enough. Now they are being told not to get close to little people they want to be friends with. I worry about the mental toll this will take on them. I can also not comfort them when they become distressed. I, too, will be in a constant state of anxiety trying to enforce all the necessary guidelines, knowing a child in the group could be asymptomatic. How am I to perform my job well if I am constantly worrying about getting sick and potentially bringing the virus home to my own family? As a reminder, in the classroom there will be no hugging, no stories on the carpet, no lunchtime chats, no playing, no partner work, no small groups, no conferring, no high fives, no hand holding, no sharing supplies, no sharing anything. School will not be a place of normal socialization, or normal routine. Nothing is normal. We are living during a global pandemic.

As a parent of slightly older children who have more self-control, I am still very concerned about them being in our building. Our pediatrician, Dr. Gregory Germain,

is Associate Chief of Pediatrics at Yale Children's Hospital. He is also the Medical Advisor to the Amity School District. [He announced last week that Yale Children's Hospital did a study of about 2000 pediatric patients that came into the hospital.](#) Some were ill in the emergency room and others were coming in for pre-op testing before procedures and operations. They found a 2.3% COVID positive rate in these patients. So 1 in 50 children were positive for COVID. This is double the infection rate of the state right now. Translating these numbers for Beecher's population would mean there would be 2 students per 100 having COVID or about 16 students. 16 students in the building could have the virus at any given moment. They could be riding buses, entering our building and going to extended day, all the while spreading this disease back to their homes and to the homes of teachers. This is bigger than just the Beecher community. This could cause the spread of infection across many towns and disrupt the general public health in many communities. It should also be noted that these were numbers at a time that children are still home. How quickly will these numbers rise when students are in school and around many more children and adults? This is very unsettling to me as a teacher and parent. There is so much we still do not know about this virus with new information coming out daily. Instead of taking a risk of opening to help with children's "socialization" it makes sense to me as a parent and a teacher to start the year in a distance learning plan.

As others have mentioned, there is not a one size fit all model. There are no easy answers. What I do know is for teachers to do their jobs in the safest way possible for our health, the health of our students and the health of our community, distance learning is the absolute best option. If we start planning now, everyone: teachers, students and parents will feel more prepared and ready to begin the year.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Nicole Chick