

January 12, 2022

BOE of Woodbridge School
40 Beecher Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525

Dear Board of Education,

As the President of the WEA, I am writing to share the incredible challenges teachers and our staff are enduring during this unprecedented time. We appreciate the continued efforts by our Administrators and Superintendent Dr. Budd who have been making a concerted effort to put in place mitigation strategies to keep the staff and students of our school as safe as possible. However, I am writing to you to inform you that our teachers continue to feel unsafe and are very concerned every day they walk into the school building.

Since our return to school in January 2022, there has been a concerning increase in Covid cases among students and staff, compromising the integrity of teaching conditions and the health and wellbeing of every individual who walks into our school building. While our Administrators and our Superintendent are making every effort to contact trace, this process, which we recognize not all schools are continuing to do, is taking our Administrators away from supervising and supporting our teachers. The district is spending almost \$500,000 to allow our administrators to contact trace. Our teachers are wondering if this role could be evaluated? Could we hire someone to do this? Could we reassign a teacher to fulfill this function temporarily? We have a lot of new teachers who need the guidance of our administrators. While Covid is with us now, our hope is that we do not lose sight of building a strong teaching community for the future.

We also think it is important that while the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) mandates educators to be first responders and the frontline workers to student learning and provide in-person learning, it also states that remote learning for K–8 should not occur. Providing an equitable learning experience cannot occur when a teacher has to provide both remote and in-person instruction. Our responsibility as educators is to the students within the walls of our school. Requiring us to reach into the community and provide learning to students at home compromises the learning experience for the students in school and ensures an inequitable modality. As Covid cases continue to spike, so are some parents deciding to keep their children home. Teachers cannot be expected, nor should they be based on the CSDE mandate, to educate students at home. Our teachers are being compelled to make accommodations that are directly against the CSDE, giving the false impression that there exists a model of dual learning. We have made a concerted effort to implement the guidelines put out by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). We should follow the same protocol and implement the guidelines set out by CSDE. Why is remote teaching being permitted in our district if the CSDE mandates it not to be?

Just as healthcare workers are experiencing burnout, so are our teachers. Staffing challenges are real in our school as they are in other districts. Capacity issues are real as well. Teachers are eating in their cars to mitigate against Covid. We do not even have the space to accommodate the students who are being isolated.

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We know that after this Covid surge, we will not return to business as usual; Covid will continue to dictate our educational delivery model. Although we are bound by the CSDE mandates, we ask that we re-evaluate our mitigation strategies and consider if what we are implementing is working and the best use of our staff? We know with the challenges we have been experiencing, we have functioned in a triage mode. However, staying in this mode is hurting our school. The system we have in place is simply not a sustainable model.

Please consider convening a team to re-evaluate the existing mitigation system and implement a plan that aligns with the CSDE plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K.K.F.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kim Kline Franklin, M.S.W, M.Ed., M.S.
President of Woodbridge Education Association