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Subject: Public comment

To the Woodbridge Board of Education:

I am the parent of a 5th-grade student and writing in a last attempt to highlight my concerns about full in-person re-opening of Beecher Road School. While I strongly agree that the rate of community spread is probably as low as it will ever get without having a vaccine and face-to-face instruction is crucial for some, those are not by any mean valid reasons for bringing more than 800 students, administrators, and support staff into the Beecher building, especially, when the BOE has failed to provide specific details relating to creating a safe place and communicating such to the parents only weeks before opening. The lack of meeting such commitment brings considerable doubt about how full in-person learning will take place without compromising the health of those on-site. In addition, the details provided thus far about re-opening spark new concerns about following CDC guidelines and mitigating outbreaks. Without reiterating all that has been sounded by others, here are a few of my talking points along with my plea for considering an alternative to full in-person return.

First, if children are sent back for in-person instruction, meeting state and CDC guidelines is imperative for creating the safest environment possible. The CDC requires at least 6 feet for social distancing; hence, placing children's desk 4 – 6 feet apart does not meet the CDC requirement and is unacceptable. Dealing with a highly contagious and virulent virus while managing the day-to-day logistics of in-class instruction is not when we can cut corners and do an 80% compliance. Either follow CDC safety guidelines to the fullest extent or change course. It is dangerous and irresponsible to proceed with full in-person instruction if the school can't create a physical setup that meets CDC social distancing guidelines. Also, I would like to see a visual representation of traffic flow in the hallways during morning drop off. It is when students, mostly from lower grades, have to track from the south building up north. It is a very long walk and would need to be closely supervised. The hallway has many sharp turns where children can easily get out of sight and would be likely to not follow social distancing or mask wearing requirements. The same request applies to presenting a video of 19 people spaced 6' walking those hallways. I have volunteered and ushered lower grade children from the north to the south and back with at least one more adult and found it difficult to keep the children in sight at all times. I can attest that this movement in the building while adhering to the 6' distancing is not feasible. Please consider putting together a video library of 'what a day looks like' with the new norm so parents can understand how in-person instruction is impacted under the current circumstances.

Next, many questions are dedicated to addressing the issue of identifying symptomatic children. I believe this is extremely helpful and instrumental in monitoring community spread. However, we've been told that the majority of children present with no or mild symptoms. While this is comforting to know, it poses an incredibly difficult scenario for identifying COVID carriers at school and also in the community in general. It is the single most important reason why I do not support our children's return to school. Without access to regular testing, where the student population can be screened every 10 days or so, it is impossible to find asymptomatic cases. In addition, with the flu season around the corner and children having seasonal allergies, it will be a daunting process to find children who are carriers and need to be isolated. With the currently proposed tactics, we will continuously be lagging in mitigating the spread of the virus.

Lastly, there's the omnipresent issue of PPE and mask availability or lack thereof. Even in the case of a hybrid model, these safety measures need to be widely available to both staff and students. Currently, it is recommended that parents supply cloth masks for students and have an extra mask available as well. Since this can add an additional burden to some, would it be possible for the town to start a 'mask drive' as the Center had done at the beginning of the pandemic for seniors? Local residents/crafters made cloth mask donations that were

dropped off without contact at the Center. During the months of March, April, and May, people in need could call and request mask(s). Arrangements for contactless pickup were done by Center employees. Is there another town agency, perhaps Youth Services or nursing staff at Beecher Road School, that could assist and organize a similar collection/distribution? It is just an idea to help especially those families that have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

In light of the above-mentioned as well as many concerns presented by others before me, please consider alternatives to full in-person attendance for the safety of the students, teachers, and their families.

Thank you for your consideration,

Monika Kaczmarczyk
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