



DFT Exec. Bd. Position

1 message

Ethan Fisher

Thu, Jan 14, 2021 at 12:12 PM

To: Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>, Jill Lofald <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, Kelly Durick Eder <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, Paul Sandholm <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, Sally Trnka <sally.trnka@isd709.org>, David Kirby <david.kirby@isd709.org>, Rosalie Loeffler-Kemp <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, Alanna Oswald <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>

The Duluth Federation of Teachers Executive Board would like to take this opportunity to clarify our role in planning throughout the 2020-2021 school year.

During this pandemic, public education is complex and requires collaboration in order to plan for success. Although we have met intermittently with administration, our teachers' union has largely been excluded from meaningful planning and decision making with our administrators.

On behalf of our teachers, we have collected questions and concerns from our colleagues. Many of these questions continue to go unanswered. We have continuously asked that our president be included in decision-making groups to little avail. Meetings that do take place are less sharing of ideas and airing of concerns and are, instead, often administration telling us decisions that have been made, leaving little opportunity to influence important decisions that impact staff and students.

There are elements of this plan we can support, however, many elements require more work to ensure a successful and safe return to full face to face instruction. It is time for transparency, collaborative leadership, and genuine regard for realistic concerns as administrators make decisions that could greatly increase our staff's exposure during a pandemic.

Of primary concern is establishing clear safety protocols that are monitored and consistently shared with staff and families.

Our teachers have little evidence that there is a workable plan for:

- Adequate social distancing in classrooms, hallways, lunchrooms, and on buses
- Providing PPE and safety barriers for students and staff
- A manageable schedule for specialists, special education teachers, and interventionists
- Substitute teachers/classroom coverage if a teacher contracts covid or must quarantine
- Adequate planning time for special education teachers and interventionists teaching in both face to face and distance learning models per the governor's order
- Meeting the governor's orders for the roll out of pre-k with grades k-2
- Meeting the technology needs to continue to implement the learning management systems while students are face to face and distance learning
- A functioning system to implement effective, timely contact tracing
- Communicating to staff and community stakeholders the implementation and fidelity of safety protocols, building infection/quarantine levels, and contact tracing timeliness

We continue to believe that the labor-management process, part of our collective bargaining agreement, affords the district and staff time to and come up with innovative and thoughtful solutions. As educators, we are on the front line of working with students and families and our insight is valuable.

We request that you direct district administration to work in meaningful collaboration with the Duluth Federation of Teachers Executive Board to develop detailed plans on the topics listed above to ensure the safest learning environment for our students and staff.

Sincerely,
Executive Board, Duluth Federation of Teachers

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Public comment for Jan 19 meeting - regarding in person learning

1 message

Jenson

Sun, Jan 17, 2021 at 11:05 AM

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Greetings our humble public servants,

Please consider NOT disregarding MN safe learning guidelines for our elementary schools. The current 14-day case rates for St. Louis county indicate hybrid learning or full distance. On the guidance from the state lists our case rate just barely and recently dropped out of ALL students distance learning but at best hybrid elementary.

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/stats/wschoo.pdf>

And last week's numbers show an uptick in case rate. In St.Louis Co.

The likelihood of illness and quarantining quickly understaffing schools is great, which will require yet another shift back to hybrid or more likely back to distance for everyone. Families need stability, predictability and your full time in-person plan is short sighted and unsafe.

It is a terrible time, with growing case rates to expand public contact and return students (85% plan to attend in person)

Thankfully our child has the option to continue distance learning, our dedicated and critical teachers do not. This is unconscionable and you have to power to correct this grave error in judgement.

Follow the state guidelines and continue distance learning or hybrid.

No one is under more risk than elementary specialists.

Many Specialists like gym, music and art teachers can easily have in-person contact with 700+ students EACH WEEK! Specialists should be remote teaching no matter what.

Source: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/stats/wschoo.pdf>

	2020.09	2020.10	2020.11	2020.12	2021.01	2021.02	2021.03
3 of 4	187.61	132.97	111.11	85.61	52.82	32.79	28.23
	133.65	114.09	106.83	96.47	67.92	44.03	34.94
Red Lake	174.65	154.69	157.19	107.29	62.38	67.37	42.42
Redwood	254.39	247.86	199.60	136.33	82.19	55.44	33.92
Renville	219.41	240.47	241.83	175.26	91.71	63.85	47.55
Rice	220.94	158.59	119.36	103.40	86.98	77.70	62.34
Rock	261.34	250.72	200.79	151.92	96.67	47.81	43.56
Roseau	286.51	265.81	236.71	171.39	75.67	36.22	24.58
St Louis	155.09	141.34	125.30	104.96	69.52	50.83	46.63
Scott	194.88	154.70	124.92	100.02	64.31	43.73	47.83
Sherburne	221.06	171.29	135.04	109.51	75.73	48.91	43.12
Sibley	217.95	156.92	102.60	82.48	57.67	44.93	45.60
Stearns	254.75	201.83	154.83	113.19	67.72	46.49	41.26
Steele	172.87	158.14	141.24	92.16	46.90	33.81	32.72
Stevens	193.17	152.29	115.49	93.01	71.55	39.86	27.60
Swift	204.02	205.08	176.39	116.88	77.57	43.57	25.50
Total	164.48	138.30	138.88	104.75	63.47	36.47	29.05

Learning Model Parameters

Number of cases per 10,000 over 14 days, by county of residence	Learning Model
0-9	In-person learning for all students
10-19	In-person learning for elementary students; hybrid learning for secondary students
20-29	Hybrid learning for all students
30-49	Hybrid learning for elementary students; distance learning for secondary students
50+	Distance learning for all students

A school district or charter school whose enrollment includes a large proportion of students from an adjacent county should use data from the county with the highest bi-weekly case rate to inform the recommended learning model. It is also important to take into account any notable increases or decreases in county-level case data to inform decision-making. For example, a school district or charter school whose most recent bi-weekly county-level data is 28 cases per 10,000 over 14 days would be recommended to operate a hybrid learning model for all students; however, if the case count has increased each week for the last month, a school may consider whether it is more appropriate to operate using a model which has fewer students learning in-person.

Concerned parent,
 Maija Jenson
 Duluth Elementary parent



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

Returning students and teachers to our schools too early

1 message

K. Peterson ·
To: public.comment@isd709.org

Sun, Jan 17, 2021 at 5:31 PM

PLEASE rethink your approach to returning students and teachers to our schools too early. PLEASE rethink your reasoning~~ and ask yourselves "why". If your answers include any threat to our children and their teachers, then stop what you are planning to do. Simply put it off. Nothing about covid has been easy, but please protect our future.

Kathy Peterson



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

Keep schools closed for now

1 message

Liz Holte

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Mon, Jan 18, 2021 at 11:12 AM

Dear School Board Members,

I am writing to ask that you keep schools closed until vaccines are widespread in our community. Even if that means schools don't open until next year, after all we've already sacrificed, rushing back now, when the numbers are almost as bad as they've ever been, seems foolish, dangerous, and shortsighted.

One of the communications from the district about returning to in person school cites the following as reasons it's okay to return:

The new state guidance is designed to prioritize in-person learning for the state's youngest students.

Per the Governor's announcement:

- Schools play a critical role in the health, well-being, and education of Minnesota's children.
- Youngest kids are less susceptible to serious complications from COVID-19.
- We have learned how to reduce spread in schools from success in other settings.

In regards to the second bullet, I encourage you to read this article from two days ago and remember that while it is a blessing that most kids do not get extremely ill, they certainly CAN spread it to the adults in their lives, both in and outside of school.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/europes-schools-are-closing-again-on-concerns-they-spread-covid-19-11610805601?fbclid=IwAR1yOyEc3WnppfXUFO213dJDDM8RIOtOw-Gol-ABumWkpyvERs2E-foMxNM>

In regards to the third bullet, yes, we have learned a lot about safety precautions, and yet the district has decided to throw even the facade of social distancing away and intends to return all children to school. How is this applying what we've learned to reduce spread?

My kids are in the distance learning program and will not be returning this year either way. I am writing not on their behalf, but on behalf of the teachers and the greater community that will suffer as a result of increased community spread. I also write on your behalf - I want to believe that you want to do the right thing - the safe thing - and that you just need enough people to ask you to prioritize the health, safety, and lives of staff and families to buoy you against the pressures of reopening prematurely. We are so close to seeing an end to this. Let's see it through. Please.

Thank you for your consideration.

Liz Holte

Sent from my iPhone

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Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

Jan 19 school board meeting and return to class

1 message

Scott Dulas <

Mon, Jan 18, 2021 at 12:01 PM

To: public.comment@isd709.org

I think it is a bad idea and risk to the public health to return students and teachers to the classrooms before winter break or before there have been teacher immunizations. I believe you would be unnecessarily risking the lives of the students and teachers. Virtual learning is not ideal. Extending virtual learning for a week or two will not make a huge difference. I think that students and teachers should return to the classroom as soon as safely possible, but not at the risk of health.

Scott Dulas
Duluth MN 55804



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

Keep teachers and students safe!

1 message

Jeanette McCallister

Mon, Jan 18, 2021 at 1:10 PM

To: "Public.Comment@isd709.org" <Public.Comment@isd709.org>

I call on the Duluth School Board to stop the return to in-person elementary schooling.
Teachers Need Vaccinations!

Jeanette Sanders McCallister



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

Delay in person learning until it is safe

1 message

DAVE . <Public.Comment@isd709.org>
To: "Public.Comment@isd709.org" <Public.Comment@isd709.org>

Mon, Jan 18, 2021 at 1:41 PM

Dear School Board members and Superintendent Magas,

I am the spouse of a DPS teacher who loves her job and, like all teachers, looks forward to being back in her classroom. I have watched for nearly a year as you have switched back and forth with your COVID19 response. I understand that this is new territory for all, but we must do what is safe. And, right now, safe is NOT full in-person learning. We are on the horizon of teachers being vaccinated. The school district should stop this plan now before we contribute to an additional spike in cases.

Dr. Michael Osterholm of the University of Minnesota and member of the new Covid Taskforce says "The new Covid variant, which is about 50% more contagious than the current strain, has been in Minnesota since the end of December and could have devastating effects by mid-February. Additionally, Dr. Osterholm says, "Kids will likely transmit it, at least to some degree, adults will get infected, and we have to be prepared for that. For example, I just would not put a lot of stock in the preliminary conclusion that children are less susceptible for becoming infected, and thus less capable for transmitting disease."

Original state guidelines said that we should not be returning to full in-person schooling at the elementary level until our county's 14-Day case rate dropped below 20. Our current county numbers are in the 40's, and local Duluth numbers are much higher. Although the state has allowed districts to disregard those numbers, doing so is irresponsible.

I plead with you to listen to and value what so many of your staff are telling you. Do not disregard them. Continue with distance learning until it is safe. Then move to hybrid and eventually in-person - but only when it is safe.

Sincerely,

Dave Mayou