

July 15, 2020

Dear Members of the Woodbridge Board of Education,

We want to start by acknowledging the hard work that the Reopening Committee and especially our administration have done this summer to create the plans as mandated by our governor. We know they are putting in countless hours to try to make the best choices they can for all parties under challenging circumstances. While we have not been privy to the specific district plan yet, the information being sent out to parents and staff thus far indicates that administration plans to follow the state's expectation to start the school year in person with all students attending all day. **We oppose this and advocate for starting the year in distance learning.**

This is not a decision we have come to lightly. Teaching is our passion. (Some of your children have been students in our classrooms and hopefully you can personally attest to this.) We love working with students in the classroom. We worked extremely hard during the distance learning experience to provide meaningful activities and projects, and more importantly maintain real connections with our students. We recognize that distance learning is not an ideal, but of course none of this is ideal. **However, the solution cannot be one that jeopardizes the health of staff and students. That can never be the best choice.**

We recognize that the Reopening Committee is trying to find creative ways to make in-school learning safe. **But the simple fact is this: during this pandemic, it will never be safe to have all students in school all day long.** We have major concerns with the very notion of starting with in-school full time learning. There are far too many factors to list here but some of our biggest concerns are:

### **(1) The inability to properly socially distance in our classrooms**

Third grade classrooms are particularly small and there is no safe way (even with clearing out all extraneous furniture) to keep 20 students even three feet apart (let alone the CDC-recommended six feet apart) in these classrooms. [Recent research](#) from Director of Yale Center for Infectious Disease Modeling & Analysis and Beecher parent Alison Galvani stated, "Given young people are disproportionately responsible for silent COVID-19 transmission, reopening schools would be adding fuel to the fire." Masks, while important, are not enough. We need a guarantee of at least six feet between each person. Additionally, new information and research keeps surfacing. There is still so much we don't know about the spread of COVID and it is reckless to assume we can be safe in school with protocols that are substandard to any other business or institution in the state.

### **(2) The lack of true cohorting**

The governor's plan spent a lot of time talking about keeping students in small cohorts. This only works if students stay in these cohorts. Cohorting goes out the window, though, if we are having students from different cohorts together on a bus. Also, if Extended Day is still on the table, it will again mix cohorts. Also, as we understand it, specialists will still be working with students, which once again compromises the cohort by bringing other teachers into it. Additionally, many Special Education and resource teachers visit multiple classrooms, further compromising the cohort.

### **(3) Insufficient staffing**

Many staff will be unable to return to school in the fall for a variety of reasons, not the least of which are underlying health conditions that make them more vulnerable. It is already incredibly difficult to find qualified long-term substitutes. We also need to think about what happens when a teacher gets sick or must quarantine for two weeks. Who will cover that classroom? Staffing seems an incredibly difficult hurdle that could lead to inequities across grade levels and across the school.

Beyond the factors mentioned above, we worry about what in-school learning would look like in the fall. What will school look like and feel like to students?

### **Teaching in this “New Normal” Benefits No One, Especially Students**

How can we properly meet students’ needs in a socially distanced model? You already know that Beecher Road School utilizes a workshop teaching method. Under the new guidelines, small groups and one-on-one meetings between teacher and student would no longer occur with those personal conversations between teacher and student, as well as, between classmates. These components are typically the hallmarks of effective teaching within the workshop model, and they would either be removed or stripped of their value within the socially distanced classroom. While not ideal, distance learning allows for plenty of individual and small group conferencing via Google Meet that can be more personal and individualized. Because of the lack of engaging group work and individual conferencing with teachers in an in-school plan, children will most likely spend more time on worksheets and other solitary, independent work without gaining the benefits that in-person instruction is supposed to provide. It will prove impossible to meet the individual needs of each student.

Schools are places of socialization, and children are indeed missing out on that socialization from home. But what type of social experience will this type of schooling provide? Children will be in rows, facing forward, and separated as much as possible. Children will be greeting their teachers and peers not only from a safe distance, but from behind a necessary face covering. They will sit away from each other and be kept, as best as possible, from students in other classes and grades. This is not the type of socialization they need.

We worry about the emotional well being of students in this new environment. Children will not know that their teacher is smiling under their mask, nor will we know if they are smiling under theirs. We won’t be able to properly comfort an upset child. We won’t be able to have private one-on-one conversations with those students who need it most. This is vastly different from the Beecher way of doing things. Teaching this way does not feel warm or welcoming, nor does it follow our school’s vision and mission.

We feel that the reopening plans being released across the state are being driven by economic interests, not human ones. Not all teachers’ voices have been able to be heard and it is important that they are.

Deciding to begin the year with distance learning **now** enables teams to plan for the start of the year and for robust lessons to come. Small group and individual instruction can be achieved digitally with a fully funded and comprehensive distance learning plan. We can find ways to make students feel more socially connected to one another. If we make the decision now, we will save the time and energy on plans that are impossible to implement safely and redirect all energy to making distance learning work better.

No one wins in this pandemic. **But choosing to start the year with distance learning could very well save lives. To us, that makes this the only safe decision to make.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
**The Third Grade Team**  
John Hutchinson  
Aimee Meacham  
Visna Ngov  
Jacqueline Scalia  
Mary Vincitorio

Dear Members of the Woodbridge Board of Education,

We appreciate the enormity of the task of planning for the 2020-2021 school year and are so grateful for your support as well as the support of our administration. In undertaking this task, we are requesting that priority be given to a distance learning model this fall. As Specialists, in one 6 day cycle we educate the entire school – close to 850 children. Let it be clear that all of us want to get back to teaching in our classrooms, but are apprehensive about doing so at this time. Given the realities of the world we live in, distance learning is the safest model as well as the one that is most conducive to student success.

It is only prudent that we consider what science describes as the safest way to progress toward normalcy. We would need testing, tracing, and treatment plans in place, PPE protection, small class sizes, etc. The funding that we would need to make reopening happen appears to be out of reach, especially given the budget constraints that we were facing prior to the pandemic. It concerns us that there will be little social distancing on a bus or in a full classroom. We can all imagine the consequences of opening our physical doors too early. Presently, CT is not in Phase 3 of reopening. We do not want to sacrifice the health of teachers, staff, children, and their families.

We must rethink our opening. Dr. Alison Galvani of Yale School of Public Health, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Modeling and Analysis (CIDMA) was recently featured on NPR News where she highlighted the results of her research. She warned of the presence of silent spreaders (pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic carriers) and the impact they have on infection rates. In her own words, opening schools would be “adding fuel to the fire” and “reckless.” Asked if she would be sending her children to school, her answer was she would not.

Covid-19 has given us an opportunity to generate new ways of educating our children. Our skillset as 21st century educators has grown exponentially over the past few months. We are confident that we will continue to rise to meet the challenges that the pandemic has thrust upon us. We will continue to adapt and pivot as needed to ensure our students are engaged, connected, and challenged. We are committed to our students’ success and safety; they are our priority. We are urging you to have us plan for an enriching and challenging curriculum online (Distance Learning) where all students are made accountable in all subjects this fall.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Acheson  
Arianne Buzzard  
Larissa Crocco

Stephanie Goldberg  
Emily Jacober  
Heather Trofimchik

Dear Members of the Woodbridge Board of Education,

We are writing to express our support for Beecher Road's efforts to thoughtfully prepare for our school's reopening in the fall and to add our support for prioritizing the distance learning option.

As a team of teachers, we are eager to get back to our classrooms and to providing meaningful, in-class instruction to our students. We are extremely concerned that going back to in-school learning at this time would jeopardize the health of our children, their families, and our colleagues. Additionally, we are not feeling confident that the level of instruction and engagement we will be able to provide students, as a result of health and safety protocols, will be as robust as what we have and can provide using well-planned and executed distance learning platforms.

At this time in Connecticut, Governor Lamont has been reluctant to move forward with Phase 3 of the reopening to protect the citizens of our state. Interestingly, the state's plans for reopening schools seems to ignore all of the precautions put in place for other places of business. The number of workers and patrons in grocery stores, hair salons, restaurants, etc. are restricted. Many workers have been informed that they will remain at home until the new year. Additionally, the state and CDC still recommend that indoor, private gatherings, should be for 25 people or fewer. How can we then say it is safe to pack over 50 children onto a bus? It seems counterintuitive that schools would be opened at full-capacity when almost every other business is facing restrictions in order to prevent the spread of this virus.

In order to feel safe returning to school for in-person teaching, it is imperative that several issues are addressed to insure the safety of our children, their families, and our staff.

- The plan for students coming to school on buses at or near full-capacity needs to be reexamined. This goes against all of the capacity guidelines for inside spaces and disregards social distancing. Masks alone are not enough. The CDC says, "The spread of COVID-19 can be reduced when cloth face coverings are used **along** with other preventative measures, including social distancing, frequent handwashing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces." Students coming to school on full buses seems to negate all of the other safety protocols we plan to put in place.
- All of the CDC recommendations for schools need to be in place (see [Considerations for Schools](#)). This includes attending to class size, spaces being used for students, cleaning, availability of PPEs, healthy water, HVAC systems, and adequate ventilation.
- A close evaluation of the academic value of returning to school for in-person instruction versus distance learning is extremely important. In-person learning is going to be drastically different from what we are accustomed to. A lot more time is going to be spent in whole group learning situations due to the necessary requirements for distancing. Additionally, the collaborative work we value will be limited in light of safety measures. We need to be certain that what we are going to provide, at a significant level of risk with in person learning, is better than what we can provide through a well-thought out distance learning program.

As much as we would like to return to the classroom in the fall, it seems premature. It is essential that we are making the decision to return to school based on what we know and understand about this virus and guidance from the experts in healthcare and science. States that have reopened too quickly are now experiencing record levels of virus. In our local area, we have already seen a summer school closed after

only a few days of operation. When we return to school, it is important that we are successful. If not, we risk students forever being fearful of coming to school.

As a state and a school community, we have worked hard to fight against the spread of this virus. We need to make sure that we continue to safeguard our community against the spread of this virus. Reflecting on the many issues our school has to address in order to ensure the safety of the children, their families, our teachers and staff with a zero budget increase, we advocate starting the school year with Distance Learning.

Thank you for taking the time to hear our concerns,

The Fourth Grade Team

Elena Lavigne Jason Nolan Michelle Shepard Michele Waldron

Dear Members of the Woodbridge Board of Education,

We understand that important decisions need to be made about the start of the school year. Everyone is trying to find the best and safest solution during an extremely challenging time. As a team, we would like to show our support for opening school by using distance learning.

As teachers, we want to be within the classroom with our students. However, in order to have students come back into Beecher Road School, we need to ensure the safety of everyone who walks into the school. Not all of the classrooms at Beecher Road School are large enough to allow for 6 feet of distance between students if the entire class is there.

Opening the school needs to be based on whether or not it is truly safe to open, not based on an economic need. Beecher Road School is not designed to allow for social distancing. With the current research from Alison Galvani, children are silent spreaders, and she believes that it would be reckless to open schools. With the entire student body in school, we are putting the Woodbridge Community in danger. Whether it is an elderly grandparent, parents with a compromised immune system, or the family members of teachers who live outside of Woodbridge, having all of our students in schools is allowing health issues to spread.

As a team, we are concerned with the fact that our teachers live in different towns, and many have school aged children as well. This means that if an outbreak occurs in a different school, our teachers may have to quarantine. Will there be enough substitutes when these situations happen? Also, if as a staff we are being responsible with our health and the health of our students, we would stay home if we have a cold, a cough, or a slight sore throat in case it is Covid-19 according to CDC Guidelines that state if you are sick, stay home. Teachers will have to take more days off, putting a further strain on finding enough substitutes from day to day.

We know that decisions are difficult to make with the changing climate and spread of the virus. The decision to reopen needs to be based on ensuring the health of all students and adults in the school based on the most current medical information available. With all of these questions, we do not feel safe returning to Beecher Road School. As of this moment, the 5th grade team feels distance learning is a safer option for the Woodbridge Community.

Thank you,  
The 5th Grade Team

To the Woodbridge Board of Education and the greater Woodbridge community:

We care about this community deeply; we acknowledge and honor the countless hours of work the Beecher Reopening Committee has dedicated in determining safe ways to welcome the children back to school once again.

The many concerns of families are being echoed across the nation: school is socially and emotionally important for children, parents need to get back to work, there is a loss of learning...

As educators, we hear you.

Just as we have taken the lead from public health experts here in Connecticut, (many of whom currently share the opinion that opening schools would be a grave disservice to our public health) teachers ask that you listen closely to our professional opinion now.

Pre-pandemic, school *was* certainly socially and emotionally important for kids. Our students typically enjoy a workshop learning format, with much time dedicated to small group and individual instruction with the teacher. The children are huddled closely together on a carpet, “turning and talking” with their peers to share about what they are learning. Our lessons are noisy, fast-paced, and exciting. The teachers are sitting closely with your children. We are literally, at times, holding their hand as we guide their learning. Learning is personal. While this is happening, other children are circulating freely around the room, finding their favorite spots to work, selecting their favorite books from our rich classroom libraries, and playing with their peers. Learning is joyful, vibrant, and beautifully messy.

Pre-pandemic, we are greeting your child at the classroom door with a smile, accompanied by a hug, a handshake, a high five, or a wave. We are starting the day with “morning meeting” by gathering in a circle, by greeting each other, and by sharing about our hopes and dreams. We are starting the school year with classroom scavenger hunts, ice cream socials, and group projects. We are wiping your child’s tears when they are upset. We are putting on their band-aids and we are helping with ice packs for playground injuries. We are encouraging them to make new friends. We are sitting closely with them during lockdown drills, especially to help reassure them when they’re anxious and afraid.

At the governor’s urging, the school reopening plans being released across the state ignore the professional opinions of educators and public health experts. The plans are largely being driven by economic interests, rather than human ones. Furthermore, these plans are being crafted without asking if educators can or will go back to school, largely ignoring the fact that many teachers are over the age of 65 and/or categorized as “high risk.” Without proper staffing, how will we possibly meet the demands of in-person or hybrid learning?

Given there are enough teachers, here is a snapshot of what school will look like if the current reopening plans are carried out. As a baseline, all carpets will be removed from the classrooms, there will be no gathering places for lessons, no “morning meetings,” and certainly no “turning and talking.” We will still greet the children each morning, but with a wave only. They will not be able to see that we are smiling under our masks. We will not know if they are smiling under theirs. Students will be sitting in rows, wearing masks, facing forward. The children will not be sharing ideas freely or collaborating on projects. Any type of academic game will be impossible to execute while maintaining proper social distance. The children will be seated, separated, and working from screens or worksheets throughout the day. We will not be able to hold their hand, give high fives, or hugs. We will not be able to sit with them in a small group and help them understand new concepts. We will not be able to sit alongside them to listen in and support. Some local plans propose the use of live streaming lessons to children at home in a hybrid model, which will add to the baseline anxiety educators will already be experiencing. Teacher worries aside, live video in any classroom throws caution to federal student privacy and confidentiality laws.

We all want to go back to school the “old way.” This “new way” will be a foreign, if not traumatizing, place for children. Yes, they will be at school. Will they be learning? Beecher Road school will be distant, clinical, and very, very quiet. This is school in a pandemic.

While not safely possible in school, small group and individual instruction **can** be achieved digitally, with a fully funded, robust distance learning plan. While there is no ideal resolution, it is clear to many educators that distance learning is the safest and most effective plan at this time. A hurried shift to distance learning -- which will occur when a member of the

community falls ill -- will force us into yet another scramble to offer distance learning curriculum within days. To plan well for either of these options means that we must invest funds, time, and resources into one option. We must choose one option, we must invest in it, and we must do that *now*.

Connecticut has been a leader in containing the pandemic because of our swift action. Let us not sacrifice our local progress at the expense of our children and our educators. **We strongly ask that the community respects the professional opinion of educators locally and across the nation, when we say that it will be impossible to implement the CDC guidelines regarding strict physical distancing, mask enforcement, constant sanitation, and hybrid learning.** Even if these measures were magically funded and implemented by August, we are not confident that these measures will keep us safe when there are still so many unknowns regarding this new virus.

In regard to the pandemic, we have seen -- firsthand -- the grave human expense of ignoring the advice of professionals. In the best interest of our students, our colleagues, and our cherished Woodbridge community, educators ask that our communities join us by thinking outside of the box, and by beginning the work now to create a safer resolution for our community with a full distance learning plan this fall.

Sincerely,

**Members of the First and Second Grade Teams**

Nicole Rizzo

Sharon Blinstrubas

Peter Halsey

Joseph DePalma

Amanda Esparo

Carrie Fanelli

Christina Thompson



To the Woodbridge Board of Education and the greater Woodbridge community:

We recognize that you are making great efforts to ensure the best possible decision for students, teachers, and families as you plan for the reopening of school. In this spirit, the sixth-grade team would like to share our concerns about the reopening decision that has been proposed by the CSDE.

We recognize and value the benefit of in-person teaching. The social and emotional connections are critical to student progress and their motivation to engage in learning.

However, we are concerned that the Department of Education and our school is making a decision that is placing our students and faculty at grave risk. We are also concerned about how this plan is putting our own faculty at risk. Some of us are at high risk per the CDC guidelines. Some of us have young children or depend on our elderly parents for childcare. Some of us have elderly parents residing in the same home. We do not feel the proposed plan provides educators with a choice, unfortunately.

We are incredibly concerned about the science and the public health data that indicates returning to school only exacerbates the risk level of COVID-19. The Connecticut State Department of Education, specifically Mr. Cardoza's office, referenced a [Washington Post article](#) that indicated other nations are returning to school as the rationale for returning to in-person schooling. However, this article is concerning on many levels. First, the use of this article is not based on science and we cannot base our opening plans on the unfounded decisions of other countries. Second, other countries, other than the U.S., have been able to get their numbers to a contained level. The article also indicates that these other countries are "abandoning social distancing measures" and cautions, "virologist warn there may be additional spread that hasn't been recognized." Furthermore, Arnaud Fontanet, head of the Epidemiology of Emerging Diseases unit in Paris, is quoted as saying, "High schoolers are still contagious and primary school students are less contagious, but not zero-risk." Is this what we are basing our plans on - the hope that there will be few outbreaks among our elementary students and the knowledge high-schoolers are likely to spread the virus?

We would prefer to base our thinking about the plans to reopen on the [science of COVID-19](#) that cautions us that our children are the silent spreaders. Alison Galvani, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Modeling and Analysis at Yale Public Health, has recently been quoted on [NPR](#) for saying, "I think it would be reckless to re-open schools until we have dramatically suppressed the number of daily cases and have the capacity to conduct sufficient contact tracing." She also has indicated by sending students back full capacity would be "adding fuel to the fire" - that 50% of the incidents of COVID-19 can be attributed to asymptomatic people.

We would ask that as much as we all know in-person teaching is ideal and what we should be doing, that we instead continue with distance learning to preserve the health and safety of our students, teachers, families, and communities so we may contain the spread of COVID-19. We ask that you reconsider the full opening of schools and keep to distance learning instead. Please let us not make a decision that requires us to cross our fingers and wait to see what happens.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

The Sixth-Grade Team

Dear Woodbridge Board of Education Members,

First and foremost, thank you for all that you have done to keep the children and staff safe during this pandemic. We appreciate the communication you provided and the support you've given us. Today we are worried. The federal and local governments have tasked you with the impossible job of opening our school safely.

Recently, Alison Galvani, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Modeling and Analysis (CIDMA) from Yale School of Public Health, shared that 50% of cases are spread by individuals, often children, who do not demonstrate any symptoms of the illness. Her research shows that people are most infectious two to three days before becoming symptomatic. By the time a body temperature is higher than normal, that person has exposed many to the virus.

While every grade will have their own needs for you to consider, we believe the exceptional students who receive special education support and the staff that supports them have unique circumstances for you to hear about.

### **1: Space Concerns:**

Resource rooms and related service rooms are smaller than typical classrooms. There is often a range as to how many students are pulled in a group (individual or maybe up to 6). How can we provide the small group and/or individual instruction required to progress students in their learning from 6 feet apart? If our classrooms are smaller, how will we be able to accommodate ensuring students are 6 feet apart? Most of our rooms use tables. Will desks be provided to rearrange furniture and eliminate tables? Some of our special education teachers share classrooms with other teachers. If each teacher is pulling a group of students, we've increased the amount of adults and students now in that space. How will we be able to create workstations that are 6 feet apart?

### **2: Proximity Concerns:**

In special education we meet children where they are and do everything we can to move them forward. Many of us put our own health aside to benefit a student's progress by working closely with students who regularly show signs of illness, very limited hygiene and self care skills, with sometimes limited time for us to disinfect or wash our own hands and materials as immediately as we should. Some of our students require hand over hand prompting, require close proximity for learning and activities of daily living. In order to fully support students, we would be not following CDC guidelines to maintain social distancing.

Per CDC, individuals with disabilities may be at an increased risk of becoming infected. Some of these students have limited mobility and/or cannot avoid coming into close contact with others who may be infected. Some of these students require support in important activities of daily living, such as handwashing. Some of these students are not able to efficiently communicate symptoms of illness. Some of these students have underlying medical conditions that put them at higher risk for severe illness.

### **3: Transportation Concerns:**

The CDC has provided guidelines for mass transit. Included in the guidelines addition to wearing masks, is encouraging social distancing by increasing spacing of passengers by closing every other row of seats. If

the driver should be focused on safely transporting students to and from school, then who will monitor mask use on the bus? If buses are expected to be at full capacity, then we are not encouraging social distancing during this time. This sends a message to students that sometimes it's okay to be close, but other times it's not. It is difficult for some special education students who benefit from consistency to understand this.

#### **4: Cohort Concerns:**

We are committed to implementing the CDC guidelines and support the science and data driving these guidelines. Cohorting has been proposed as a great way to better trace and hopefully limit exposure. Let's take student A. Student A takes the bus to school at full capacity with grades K-6. Student A then goes to his 3rd grade class. Student A receives special education supports, so during reading this student goes to the resource room with other students from 3rd grade classes. Later in the day student A goes to speech, with other students that match those needs (maybe in a different grade). Now student A stays after school for extended day. That student has now been a part of 5 different cohorts over the course of the day. How are we limiting exposure as the 3rd grade class cohort is no longer exclusive? How will students with IEPs or otherwise receiving special education services be included with their regular education peers and activities if cohorts are enforced based on classrooms? Currently, Teaching Assistants support multiple students across the day, not just stay with one student all day. This allows us to fully maximize schedules and the use of staff we have. If we continue to use TAs in this way, then we are increasing the amount of students they are coming in contact with as well.

#### **5: Social/Emotional Concerns:**

There is an understanding of wanting students to return to school to get back to social interactions. However, these social interactions will not be once as they were. Students will be required to wear masks. Some special education students will have difficulty with this due to sensory needs, refusal or inability to communicate that they are experiencing breathing discomfort or other symptoms. How will we be able to enforce this with these students? Some of these students may also have close one on one support, so we are exposing staff to more potential illness. Recess and special education classes that focus on using games for skill building and learning, will no longer be the same. Not only will special education students have a need for social/emotional curriculum, but so will general education students. Is it okay to prioritize this over academic curriculum?

While distance learning wasn't perfect, it was also started from a place of crisis. During distance learning teachers figured out different ways to accommodate students. If we receive time at the beginning of the school year to focus on one model, distance learning, we can improve those techniques, collaborate with our peers and work with families to help serve them better.

Dr. Anthony Fauci warns that the US may soon see 100,000 new cases per day. We will only support a full distance learning curriculum until counties in Connecticut report no new cases for 14 consecutive days.

Thank you for all that you are doing to keep us all safe.

Sincerely,  
The Special Education Team

Woodbridge Board of Education Members,

We are writing to show our support of the Beecher Road School community and acknowledge the incredibly challenging work the administrative team has been doing along with the reopening committee. We would also like to take this opportunity to share our concerns regarding the reopening of the school building for in-person instruction in just a few short weeks.

First and foremost, our primary concern is for the health and well-being of our staff, students and families. Information on this virus is fluid, changing daily and there still are so many unknowns. Recent research states being outdoors is safer than indoors and schools deliver instruction indoors. There is also growing evidence that the virus is airborne. While businesses and corporations in our state are not allowed to operate at full capacity, why are we being encouraged to enter a building with a history of HVAC problems, at full capacity five days a week seven hours a day?

Recently, Dr. Alison Galvani, Director of the Yale Center for Infectious Disease Modeling and Analysis, released the findings of a new Covid-19 study which she co-authored. This study points out two very important facts school districts should be cognizant of. The study found the peak of infectiousness occurs during the presymptomatic phase before symptoms occur or in those people infected who are asymptomatic. Up to 50% of transmission comes from asymptomatic people with children often falling into this group. Ms. Galvani points out younger people are "disproportionately responsible" for silent transmission. With this in mind, teachers will be in a constant state of stress and anxiety worrying they are being exposed to this virus by asymptomatic children and then in turn carrying this disease home to their loved-ones.

The reality of a full capacity in-school plan is that social distancing will not occur within the classroom setting, especially in those rooms housing our younger students. Based on recent parent survey results, we anticipate 16.1% of our school population to be enrolled in kindergarten for the 2020-2021 school year. This percentage will most likely be larger based on the fact that only 497 responses were received. Kindergarten classrooms are outfitted with 4 student tables. Based on full occupancy, we are looking at classrooms set up to accommodate 5 to 6 students per table all facing one another. This is not conducive to social distancing, something we know is effective in controlling the spread of this virus. Our classrooms at full capacity, do not contain adequate square footage to socially distance children 6 feet away from one another even if our seating situation is addressed.

For some of our children, this is their first time in a school setting. We are trying to teach them routines and procedures while also building a classroom community through kindness and compassion. Having to attempt to remain six feet away while trying to calm their fears about being in a new environment without their family members is impossible and heartbreaking to think about.

We understand the importance of students' mental health and the need for them to socialize with others. Opening schools would at first appear the best solution to these issues. When children and parents are envisioning this, it is easy to picture school Pre-Covid. Given our current Covid situation, socialization will be extremely difficult in school. CDC guidelines recommend students face forward while direct instruction takes place. Small group work and/or partner work will be impossible as will any sort of collaboration. Kindergarten classrooms are beautiful, messy places filled with songs and movement, sharing of supplies and materials, children busy building with blocks and playing as well as gathering together on the rug to learn. None of this will be able to happen and in turn, our Kindergarten classrooms will now look and feel cold, distant and very quiet.

As much as our hearts want to be back in the building doing what we love, our sensibility is telling us we should be spending time now to develop a more robust distance learning plan so we can build a classroom community and develop relationships with our students in a meaningful way virtually. This will ensure not only a thoughtful and calm start to the year, it will also keep our families and the families at Beecher safe.

Thank you for your consideration and time,  
The Kindergarten Team- Teachers and Teaching Assistants  
Nicole Chick  
Megan Cofrancesco  
Jeanne Dempsey  
Lisa Farnen  
Allie Grabowski  
Teresa Ramia  
Jenn Cooper  
Laura Sexton  
Karen Zelem

To the Beecher Road School Administration, Board of Education, parents, families, and the greater Woodbridge community:

We have always taken great pride in being “Beecher teachers” and we love this community deeply. We are a part of a community of brilliant educators who continuously learn from one another. We are proud to say, at Beecher Road, we do what we know is right for students.

On a state and national level, educators’ concerns are largely being left out of school reopening planning, because they do not match the economic interests of this decision. Furthermore, these plans are being crafted while largely ignoring the fact that [many teachers may fall into high-risk categories](#) and may not be able to return to in-person learning. Without proper staffing, how will we possibly meet the demands of in-person or hybrid learning models being proposed?

We care about you and your children deeply. It is impossible to simultaneously enact safe social distancing measures and keep school a joyful, vibrant place for children. The children will be sitting at their desks all day and working on iPads or worksheets with little to no movement. This is a stark contrast to the school we all know and so badly wish to return to. We are gravely concerned about how these measures will [impact the long-term social emotional well-being of children](#).

For many reasons, the in-person and hybrid models being proposed are sacrificing the quality of education that could be provided remotely. Please hear the call to action that is being echoed by educators across the nation: ***Going back to school is not right or safe for students!***

Public health experts and scientific data have made it clear by proposing reopening school in-person, you are risking the lives of the Beecher community. Research has proven that [children transmit COVID-19](#) at the same rate as adults. We are fortunate to have an expert living in our community, Dr. Alison Galvani, Director of the Yale Center for Infectious Disease Modeling and Analysis. She has publicly shared on [NPR](#) that opening schools would be “reckless.” She also stated that she will not be sending her children back to school in the fall. Furthermore, she has been interviewed on [CNN](#), saying “that opening schools would be adding fuel to the fire.”

Teachers need professional development and time to fully prepare for a robust distance learning model. We ask that you support our teachers in Woodbridge by preparing **now** to offer the most rigorous distance learning model for children this fall.

The health and well-being of the Beecher community needs to be the priority as we go forward with the planning of reopening.

Thank you,  
Caterina Zdrowski  
President, Woodbridge Education Association