

Board of Education
Beecher Road School
40 Beecher Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525

January 20, 2022

Dear Board of Education,

As a member of the WEA, I have participated in numerous BOE meetings, listened in on the sidelines as important issues are discussed and decisions are voted upon. I have also participated in public comments as a member and as a representative of our WEA. I have watched and listened as decisions get made that impact teachers and teaching conditions. Unfortunately, teachers are not included in the BOE agenda, nor are they permitted a seat at the table to offer their voice.

After great reflection from the January 18, 2022 meeting in which I requested to speak during public comment, as this is the only time allotted to the WEA representatives, I was provided the allotted standard 3 minutes. Knowing what I had to say was critical to report as our staff are feeling the burden of teaching in this Covid environment, I reached out in advance and requested additional time. I understand the rationale for not allotting me the time was to not set a precedent for others who wish to participate in public comment. Therefore, I raced through making an effort to stay within the 3 minutes and, at the same time, knowing full well I was not going to successfully say what needed to be said within the 3 minutes provided.

However, as I sat and listened to the duration of the meeting, I could not help but feel that the BOE meetings are an inequitable and nondemocratic process. I know this system that is in place is an age-old process. However, as I listened as the PTO representative, Joi Prud'homme, for whom I have the deepest respect provide her update beyond 3 minutes, I questioned why doesn't a teacher have this same opportunity? Why does the PTO get to be part of the agenda but a WEA representative does not? The perspective that is often shared during these meetings is from the administrators' lens. The purpose for writing this is not to suggest there is any distrust with our administrators; it is simply to acknowledge the bias and inequity in a system that is dependent on the strength of good teachers but neglects to acknowledge their voice.

If we are to make our school strong and effectively make change that is meaningful for our students, then we need to allow our teachers the space to share their experiences. Essentially, allowing teachers' voice at the table creates opportunity for growth. We need to create and foster a dynamic that provides all voices to be heard and recognize shared differences as healthy for growth. Innovative ideas do not come from maintaining the status quo. Teachers have direct knowledge of the challenges they are experiencing in their classroom and within the school, and most importantly, they know what students need. If what we want is an inclusive school culture and equity for our students, then we need to model that in our systems as well.

I am requesting that the BOE consider allowing a WEA representative a seat at the table. I am not suggesting that the teacher representative takes part in the voting process or Executive Session. If we are to engage in a true democratic process, I ask that we re-consider the age-old system of excluding teacher representation from the BOE agenda and allow a WEA representative the full opportunity to provide updates as deemed necessary as part of the regularly scheduled BOE meetings.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Kline Franklin', written in a cursive style.

Kim Kline Franklin, M.S.W., M.Ed., M.S.
WEA President



Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

Fwd: [External Email] Public Correspondence

1 message

Lynn Plascyk <lplascyk@woodbridgeps.org>
To: Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

Mon, Feb 28, 2022 at 12:07 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Josh Gelder** <jdgifter79@yahoo.com>
Date: Mon, Feb 28, 2022 at 11:14 AM
Subject: [External Email] Public Correspondence
To: lplascyk@woodbridgeps.org <lplascyk@woodbridgeps.org>, mmadonick@woodbridgeps.org <mmadonick@woodbridgeps.org>, sdelprete@woodbridgeps.org <sdelprete@woodbridgeps.org>, jdahya@woodbridgeps.org <jdahya@woodbridgeps.org>, jhughes@woodbridgeps.org <jhughes@woodbridgeps.org>, mstrambler@woodbridgeps.org <mstrambler@woodbridgeps.org>, bhopkins@woodbridgeps.org <bhopkins@woodbridgeps.org>, ewilliamson@woodbridgeps.org <ewilliamson@woodbridgeps.org>, Jonathan Budd <jbudd@woodbridgeps.org>

Good day Beecher Road Board of Ed members,

Thank you for allowing the parents to speak last week during the special meeting regarding the mask mandates. I truly felt the discussions were lively and representative of the diverse opinions of the community and the BOE. With that said, I would like to continue the discussion around some of the mitigation methods that are still on the table for potential reinstatement in the future. Rather than re typing all of my points, I have forwarded the email trail I had with Dr. Budd since last weeks meeting. In the spirit of being pragmatic and thorough, I would like to see some discussion about the effectiveness of all mitigation methods that can potentially be reinstated, specifically masking.

Thank you again for your time,

Joshua D. Gelder

jdgifter79@yahoo.com

203-685-6475

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Josh Gelder <jdgifter79@yahoo.com>
To: Jonathan Budd <jbudd@woodbridgeps.org>
Sent: Friday, February 25, 2022, 12:11:57 PM EST
Subject: Re: [External Email] Re: Thank You

Jonathan,

Thank you for your follow up. I can appreciate that much of the decision making preceded your tenure. I also can understand how there may not have been any specific data discussed regarding the mask effectiveness at the start of covid, as decisions being made were likely based off of guidance from QVHD and the State of CT. I do think that there should have been specific questions asked about the mitigation methods, especially for something as obtrusive as forcing a child to wear a mask all day for two years.

I ask this because the situation has obviously now completely changed. The BOE is now fully in control of the decision making process, free from state mandates. Per the words of multiple members of the board from Wednesday evenings meeting, the decision making will all take place locally from here on out. Therefore, the BOE now has another opportunity to show that due diligence took place for all proposed mitigation methods that could potentially be reinstated in the future.

This is also a great opportunity to look back and learn from all actions taken over the last two years to evaluate what actions that were taken would be considered best practice to use again in the future. It's also a good time to assess which actions taken that may not have been necessary in light of all of the data that we have now that wasn't available at the onset of Covid. Please know that I and other parents would like to see the board show that the proposed metrics include an analyses of the efficacy of all proposed mitigation methods.

We would also like to see a risk vs. benefit (pros vs. cons) analyses of the methods. There may be multiple mitigation measures that do make a difference in transmission prevention, but if they cause more collateral damage to the student through mental health and development delay, then is there truly a net benefit?

I know this may seem like a big ask, especially since we are entering the later stages of this pandemic. With that said, should there ever be another public health situation like this again, we will already have a fully vetted, community approved plan in place that is ready to be implemented immediately.

I am ok with these emails being shared with the BOE.

Thanks again for your time,

Joshua D. Gelder

jdgelder79@yahoo.com

203-685-6475

On Friday, February 25, 2022, 11:06:34 AM EST, Jonathan Budd <jbudd@woodbridgeps.org> wrote:

Hi Josh,

Thanks for your e-mail. I do appreciate your civility, and your thoughtful engagement, including the thorough document you sent to supplement your oral remarks at the BOE meeting.

In terms of the District's mask policies, they were developed prior to my arrival in the District. I have looked back at the public record for September 2020 (when they were first approved by the BOE) and December 2020 (when they were revised by the BOE), and I do not find any supplemental documents, just the text of the policies themselves being discussed and ultimately approved. The mask policies were revised again after my arrival: in August 2021 they were changed simply to reflect that social distancing requirements moved from 6 feet to 3 feet based on that change to be implemented in September 2021, but no other revisions were made. The substantive discussion and development of the policies thus totally precedes my arrival in Woodbridge, and I do not find anything in the record for data that might assist you.

I will say that the BOE has a standing item on its agenda for a report from me on the Safe Return Plan and COVID guidelines. I will be providing that report Monday evening, although it will be somewhat briefer than usual because we have just had the meeting this past week. I anticipate informing the BOE on any progress made toward the data-based metric they discussed and included in the motion that passed Wednesday night.

Please let me know if I can be of further help,

Jonathan

Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Woodbridge, CT School District
jbudd@woodbridgeps.org
203-387-6631

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On Thu, Feb 24, 2022 at 10:04 AM Josh Gelder <jdgifter79@yahoo.com> wrote:

Good morning Dr. Budd,

I appreciate the opportunity to speak again last night. I was going to email you to follow up on my request for the data that was used by the board of Ed to decide that masking is an effective tool to prevent the spread of covid. There has been substantial evidence that has come out since that start of covid that does not support mask effectiveness. I posted a document in my correspondence with links to many studies that support mask ineffectiveness. Along with the data other parents presented last night, especially around the covid particle size that pass right through masks, I feel this is more than enough evidence to raise serious discussion amongst the board about masking **effectiveness**.

This is the **second** time I have publicly requested this data. As a parent that had to watch my kids be masked for over 700 days, I am not accepting lack of clarity on the decision making process that led to our children being masked. I am all for mitigation strategies, but they need to be proven that they work before I will support them.

I understand that the board wants to leave the possibility open to reinstate masking policies in the future, and other mitigation strategies. We the parents have been very civil with the board, and very patient. As I stated above our kids have been in masks for 700 plus days. I am asking for the data that was used to support masks as an effective mitigation tool.

If this cant be given to us, I would like to board to add to the next agenda the discussion of removing masks from the list of potential mitigation strategies that could potentially be reinstated in the future. Having kids wear masks that provide no benefit for mitigation is cruel and unnecessary, so until any real data is provided I will continue to fight for their permanent removal.

Please let me know when this data can be provided.

Thank you again for your time,

Joshua D. Gelder

jdgifter79@yahoo.com

203-685-6475

On Thursday, February 24, 2022, 09:06:14 AM EST, Jonathan Budd <jbudd@woodbridgeps.org> wrote:

Good morning, Josh,

I want to thank you for your comments last night during Public Comment. I know that the Board members appreciated your thoughtful and civil presentation, and took your remarks into consideration.

Thank you again for contributing.

Jonathan

Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Woodbridge, CT School District
jbudd@woodbridgeps.org
203-387-6631

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Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

For Correspondence for BoardBook for This Evening

1 message

Jonathan Budd <jbudd@woodbridgeps.org>
To: Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

Mon, Feb 28, 2022 at 3:28 PM

Hi Marsha,

Mr. Nichol has asked that his e-mail (see below) be added to Correspondence for tonight's meeting.

Thanks,

Jonathan

From: Tricia Nichol <trichol430@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Feb 28, 2022 at 9:04 AM
Subject: [External Email] letter regarding boards decision with mask
To: <lpiascyk@woodbridgeps.org>, <mmadonick@woodbridgeps.org>, <jdahya@woodbridgeps.org>, <mstrambler@woodbridgeps.org>, <bhopkins@woodbridgeps.org>

Dr. Budd and The Board of Education

My wife and I are parents of two children within the Amity school system, a child in Amity High School, and the other in Beecher Road. After the results of the Wednesday night meeting I was complacent in leaving the results of the meeting alone. When we, my family, left the meeting at 845pm, a motion had been sent forward and seconded to let the children remove their masks as a choice. My daughter was very excited, as evidence of her smile and enthusiasm.

We were frustrated with the quality of the meeting, it was difficult to follow due to the WIFI, there were many frozen moments, that I feel, left many important details unobtainable in the moment.

When we received the email the following day that stated we as a community were going to keep the masks until the 7th of March, was very upsetting and left us shocked. After listening to the meeting, 12 out of the 14 people that spoke, were in favor of having the masks optional.

With this information, I began to review the statements made in the meeting. One statement that was made, "was that no matter the outcome of this meeting we will respect the decision as to not create a riff in the community". I then realized that the Board does not respect the parents or the teachers of Beecher Road. It appears that the meeting was a waste of time for the community, the meeting reads as if the decision to keep the masks was pre-determined and calculated.

Over the last two and half years, the Board of Education, Superintendent, Teachers, and the Nursing staff. Have been strict regarding the guidelines set forth by the CDC, the governing body that has guided the nation in this pandemic. Yet the very same CDC, that recommended that masks become optional, is no longer a governing body that this administration is willing to listen to. Why would our administration not listen to them now, it seems that the administration will pick and choose information that suits their needs and not that of the children.

The other issue I have is with the bus. Beecher Road Board of Education has made the decision to have our children wear masks on the buses. Yet Amity High School Board of Education has made the decision to

not have the children riding the bus to High School wear masks. This puzzles me, since we live in a small community where we have multi-aged children in Woodbridge households using the buses minutes after children have been not wearing masks. The time between some of the drop off and pick up is less than 15 minutes, the time in which the CDC stated that the chances of becoming infected with the disease was still viable.

The last point I have to make is this. As a taxpayer in the community, the decision was made to upgrade and improve the HVAC system in Beecher Road due to the known mold problem that existed. Is the system not working properly? I believe it is since the numbers of Covid cases in Beecher Road have not been high.

I wonder, The Board of Education, mentioned the transition to the mask option and the concern with empathy and bullying towards those children who decided to continue to wear a mask. Did the members of the board take the time to consider the overwhelming concerns of the parents and the bullying power of the board to stretch time issues out as long as they can.

I am available to meet any Board member in a public place maskless, of course to discuss the issues that I have outlined. I find it more polite to see with whom I speaking with.

Thank you

Jamie Nichol

203-623-1280

Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D.
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