



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**"Public School Closing Hearing held on October 6th, 2020".**

1 message

Chris Vold &lt;[redacted]&gt;

Tue, Oct 6, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Board meeting comments:

Hi folks--my name is Chris Vold-- AEO Coordinator/ ALC Dean of Students and I'm here on behalf of the AEO/ALC school staff housed here in this building.

I'm not here this evening to oppose or dispute anything that may be discussed in tonight's proceedings. My purpose in being here is to share some information, maybe some brief history, and perhaps some thoughts or ideas that might be considered going forward.

First, this building is home to many district departments and programs, including 2 high functioning and growing schools:

Our online school (AEO) has gone from 66 part-time students in 2014 to over 560 students last spring, prior to Covid turning our world and schools upside down. Last year, AEO students earned 1746 ISD 709 semester credits. AEO is recognized by MDE as a leader amongst the online providers in the state. Our own district has recognized our expertise and has leaned on us during the pandemic to support our district's overworked and overwhelmed teachers. We continue to teach and support our colleagues any way we can, as we know how hard it is for them to transition to this distance delivery method of teaching.

Our Area Learning Center has gone through an entire programming revamp over the last 7 to 8 years. In our last uninterrupted school year prior to the pandemic (2018-2019), ALC enrolled 748 students into our seatbased, credit recovery, and independent study programs. While we serve students from many area schools such as Hermantown, Proctor, Two Harbors, etc, each year we positively impact the graduation and success rates of our own Duluth East and Denfeld High Schools. It should also be mentioned that we operate year-round, providing the area's summer school option for students. In 2018-2019, we helped Duluth East students recover 203 semester credits, and we helped Denfeld students recover 211 semester credits. To briefly summarize: the quality work done by AEO and ALC is of significant importance to ISD 709.

So, to get back to why we are here...we are having this hearing tonight to discuss the possibility of closing this building. And whether a deal comes to fruition in the next month or the next year, it probably should and will happen at some point. This will no doubt lead to a great many questions, ideas, plans, and decisions that will have to be made. Wants, needs, and the cost for everything impacted will be scrutinized by all stake-holders, and at this moment in time, no one really has any idea how that is going to go. However, one thing is for sure, and that is that it's all going to go-----this building and everything in it (including ALC and AEO) is going to have to go somewhere at some point. And that is why I am here and why we are concerned with what might happen to our students and our staff as plans move forward.

Yesterday Mr. Magas was kind enough to find 30 minutes in his packed schedule to meet with the AEO/ALC staff. He talked and we listened. He was supportive and appreciative of the work we do one floor below him. He talked about possibilities for us and the district moving forward. When he finished and had to

move onto his next meeting, many of us continued the discussion. Mr. Magas had either intentionally or unintentionally re-energized us. We were encouraged by some things he said and we regained our focus. We looked at notes we have been compiling over the last few years. We revisited plans and ideas that had been put away until "future possibilities" might be appropriate to discuss. We went back again and looked at models of schools that had programming that was intriguing to us. We decided we wanted to pursue partnerships that had been considered in the past but hadn't been encouraged to really explore with any depth. This all took place within 24 hours of simply being given an opportunity for our staff to meet with Mr. Magas.

Now you may be wondering where I am going with this; why I have stayed in this building since 8am when I got here for work this morning just so I could talk with you instead of sending you an email. It's quite simple: I stayed to speak with you because I believe in the work we do here for this district. I am here because I believe the people I work with are some of the best colleagues I have had in 30 years in education. I am here because I believe everyone in this room has the opportunity to be a part of something truly awesome that can eventually benefit our students and their families in ways that this district has only dreamed about in the past. The timing of this building closure hearing could be exactly what we need to come together and start deliberate, inclusive, and transparent conversations to develop plans for our future. Our staff has started one school from scratch and rebooted another. We know what hard work is and we simply want to join you at the table to lend our expertise, be a vital resource for you, and help you make a difference for our students, our schools, and our city.

Again, on behalf of the staff for AEO/ALC, we would love to meet with the board and the administration as soon as possible to share our ideas on what a potential relocated, rebranded, restructured online and area learning center school could eventually morph into.

I want to thank you for your time, wish you all health and safety as you work together, and I hope you invite us to be part of that work. Good night.

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*\*Please note that our website is now: [isd709.org/aeo](https://isd709.org/aeo)*

**Chris Vold**  
Coordinator  
Academic Excellence Online School  
Duluth Public Schools

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Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Distance learning

1 message

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**Bart Martinson**

To: [public.comment@isd709.org](mailto:public.comment@isd709.org)

Thu, Oct 15, 2020 at ..

Greetings,

My name is Brandon Martinson and I have 3 children in ISD 709. Two of them attend Congdon Park Elementary in 1st and 3rd grade. The other is in 6th grade at Ordean East. The current format of distance and hybrid learning is not working. My wife and I are not teachers. Even with the distance learning and hybrid learning models, each child demands hours of assistance daily and in my opinion is not gaining learning much. The children need to be in front of a teacher. If it is not possible to do this in person, they should have scheduled online classes daily. The expectation of them navigating the platform alone or with parental supervision is unreasonable and ridiculous. These children need to be in school with a teacher, not being given assignments with the expectation that their parents have hours to help them through it. Please put our children in school full time. Other districts can do it, so should we.

Brandon Martinson



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**Public comment for 10/20/20 school board meeting**

1 message

**Leslie Sauve**

Fri, Oct 16, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

October 16, 2020

RE: Public Comment

Dear ISD 709 School Board:

Thank you for reading this into the record of the School Board meeting on October 20, 2020. My name is Leslie Sauve, my husband Jesse and I are parents to a preschooler attending preschool full time outside of ISD 709 and a second grader (B schedule group) at Homecroft Elementary.

I will begin by stating that it is our belief that both elementary and secondary students should be allowed to return to school full time as the distance learning being provided is less than acceptable. Our son's classroom size (due to families choosing full distance and students leaving the district) is similar to the size of daycares and preschools that remain open full time and in person. Similarly, it is hard to understand the rationale behind allowing the Tier 1 child care (which we participate in) where students of all ages, from multiple schools congregate together with minimal oversight or enforcement of social distancing practices but our children cannot attend their home school full time and in person. Furthermore, colleges/universities have now moved to stage 3 which includes 100% in person learning options. The majority of these students are of the group/age testing positive at increased levels and much more apt to participate in activities prone to spreading the virus than our students would ever be. And yet, our children cannot attend their home school full time, in person.

As background, following the school closure in March, our son began experiencing great anxiety exhibited by extreme sleep disturbances and fear requiring us to seek psychological appointments and assistance. I am disappointed that we have never been contacted by the district to discuss our child(ren)'s mental/emotional health. Our son is terrified, as are we that the district will return to full distance learning as his anxiety, fear and sleep disturbances quite literally improved by 50% within the first two weeks of in person learning. We are fortunate and privileged to have access to the care we need; we hurt for those that are not and do not believe we are serving our district's children equitably or adequately.

I am pleased to report that our son adores his teacher and his time in school, so much so that he requests we send him on Mondays and Tuesdays as well "to see if they'll let me stay". This is a testament. Unfortunately, on distance learning days, he reports feeling unchallenged, "bored" and uninterested in learning. It is heartbreaking to witness this disenchantment with learning. As an example, both our second grader and preschooler were assigned math work that was quite literally the same assignment. Prior to our shutdown, our son was participating in third grade math and reading at a similar level. Because of this, we have spent the majority of our time supplementing his instruction and work through homeschool curriculums. We are fortunate to have access and the ability to do this, however, we both are employed at a full time level and to be frank, we are all exhausted.

Due to the uncertainty and quite frankly, canned and generic information and responses being provided by our district we have thoroughly and seriously explored our options outside of ISD 709. Our son has received no synchronous or asynchronous instruction and when we've inquired about this to our school and teacher going forward we've been told that it's "not an option" and will not happen. Our children are not receiving

an equitable education; our children are and will continue to be "behind" neighboring schools and districts that are also in the hybrid model but are providing true, interactive instruction and education to their students. ISD 709 is failing our students and we cannot continue to attend a district that chooses to do so.

To end, I will reiterate; it is our belief that all students should be allowed back to school full time, in person. The questions that remain continually unanswered are: how will the A/B schedule inequities be addressed? Our son has significantly less opportunities for in person learning due to holidays and "off days". Can we expect synchronous/asynchronous instruction as indicated in the district's return to learn plan? How many children/families have left ISD 709 since distance learning began? How will our children's mental/emotional health be addressed?

Thank you for your time.

Leslie and Jesse Sauve



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**School**

1 message

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**Amy Fossum,**

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Fri, Oct 16, 2020

Hi there,

My name is Amy Fossum. I have a son who attends Denfeld high school & a daughter who attends Lincoln middle school. Overall the school year has been ok. I have two major concerns. While I know that numbers are increasing right now a hybrid model should have been in place at the beginning of the school year. Is there a plan to return to the classroom? My kids lack social interaction in a structured environment & I worry about their mental health. Required synchronous learning would be a start but at what point will they be able to go back to school?

My other big concern is the plan to take away sports of numbers stay above 30 for 3 weeks in a row. Are high school sports the source of the increased numbers? No, but these kids are the first to get punished by taking it away. Both of my kids were able to participate on the Denfeld soccer teams this fall. It gave them daily activity & something structured to go to in person. It was done in a safe manner & the families I know who's kids were on the teams were very careful regarding Covid because nobody wanted to lose the one thing they had. It helped my kids mental health during this time & they looked forward to every single practice. Please reconsider the guidelines you have in place. Some of the winter sports such as Nordic ski are very low risk. The kids are outdoors & always apart by nature of the skis themselves. Even the others can be done safely. Believe me, if sports do not happen, those kids will still find ways to get together in a less safe environment.

Thank you for your time.

Amy

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## Activities

1 message

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**Nathaniel Burke**

Fri, Oct 16, 2020 .

To: public.comment@isd709.org

The way the administration has handled this situation is very ridiculous in my opinion. Now on top of this the fact they want to take away our activities is completely a joke when there hasn't been any problems during the course of any athletic season so far. The reason this cancellation of sports isn't due to the kids, it's the adults in the community getting COVID. There is absolutely no reason taking athletics and activities away from kids is a good thing to do. Absolutely a joke that this even is being considered, we have had no problems.

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Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## HS Sports

1 message

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**Kari Bulthuis**

Sat, Oct 17, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>

I'd like to see the continuation of sports WITH THE USE of masks worn AT ALL TIMES by players when on the ice, the field, or the court. I think that indoor sports are too high risk to allow without the use of masks.

Thank you for continuing to put the health and safety of our student athletes above all else. There are too many players and parents engaging in considerable high risk social activities potentially placing our students at risk.

Thank you,  
A Denfeld Parent

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Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## Let us play

1 message

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**Angela Stocke.**

Sat, Oct 17, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

I am a mother of 3 boys in Duluth.  
Hockey and sports is their ONE outlet as schools are closed.  
The community cost of keeping all kids out of sports is too high.  
The kids aren't the ones getting sick.  
**LET US PLAY.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela Stocke".

Business + Money + Life Coach  
[www.angstocke.com](http://www.angstocke.com)



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## Sports.

1 message

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Sean mcgee

Sat, Oct 17, 2020 .

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Please do not listen to these crazy people who want sports to continue. The next 4 months are supposed to have massive cases and deaths. Look at Corona Tracker or World O Meter for data on the virus. World O Meter forecasts 400,000 people dead by Feb 1. That is almost double the amount of deaths we are currently at. It took 7.5 months to get to 200,000 deaths and they are looking at 3.5 months to add another 200,000.

Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota are all having RECORD increases now. Wisconsin has been in the top 2-3 most infected states in the nation right now. Wisconsin has only 5 million people. It is burning through the state at over 4,000 cases a day. Yesterday Minnesota hit a record of 2300 daily cases. October 10 was the record at 1500 daily cases. Duluth had 300 cases the first 6 months of the virus. Now it has 300 cases a WEEK.

These parents are ignorant. Don't listen to them. You have to save the kids from the stupid parents.

**CANCEL SPORTS!!!!**



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**DO NOT ABANDON OUR CHILDREN**

1 message

**Melissa Latimore**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

I am writing to you to URGE you please - please do not discontinue sports for the students in our district. I have 4 sons - one of them is a senior who has been counting on his senior year to showcase his talents so that he can earn a scholarship for college - I am talking about years and years of paid conditioning training, outside coaching, sacrificing a ton of extracurricular activities in order to focus on his sport. We cannot afford college any other way, as I don't qualify for most hardship scholarships and grants, yet I don't make nearly enough as a single parent to put him through school. Sports activities improve my kids' overall health through physical activity including their mental health. Physical and mental health is extraordinarily important to my family.

Our family has taken extra precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and am concerned that my children are being punished because we have done every single thing we've been asked by the governor, by DHS, by the CDC.

My oldest son played AAU basketball all summer, all those tournaments were in the twin cities - they were completely successful at mitigating the spread of COVID19 through the precautions they set up. My youngest son played baseball all summer and continued to go to boxing classes multiple times a week in Duluth - there have been ZERO problems. They both have been going to camps and fall leagues - everyone is taking the required precautions seriously and there have been no problems. Local sports/extracurricular activities have had an overwhelming low number of positive cases COVID-19. I personally cannot think of a single case, although I'm sure there has been.

My children NEED structure. Although we've tried our best, we cannot achieve what sports and extracurricular activities provide. My kids depend on these activities for their friendships, for healthy outlets, and like I said, for college opportunities.

This decision, I fear, will lead to our kids enrolling in neighboring programming - because the other area school districts are still having school and sports (and not to mention - all of these kids from Cloquet, Proctor, Hermantown, etc... where they are NOT shutting down - those kids all hang out and play in the same outside leagues and AAU teams, go to the same malls, and churches... we are all exposed to one another anyways - none of this makes any sense at all as to why you would consider taking away something so CRITICAL to a kids' physical and mental health when these numbers are overwhelming low, and if there is a case, it is handled according to CDC recommendations.

If anything, we should consider other solutions first; such as playing games without fans, live-streaming all games, have stricter mask policy in practices... but none of that has even been offered as a solution.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns - I could write a much longer email and in a lot more detail, but I know you are busy and likely don't have time for that. Please, we are doing everything we're being asked and taking this seriously. Please don't punish our kids because of numbers that are rising as a result of increased testing - of course the numbers will rise as we step up our testing as a community. At least try other things first before throwing all the athletics and activities out - this is very serious. I fear the number of kids starting to drink and use drugs is going to rise (this is my field of expertise, what I do for a living, and I can tell you for a fact that isolation is leading to increase relapse in people), it will impact their mental health - these are such important developmental milestones in a teenagers life and this cannot be taken lightly.

Best regards to you, your health and the health of those in your own life -  
Melissa



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## High School Sports

1 message

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Rhett Bonner

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org, david.kirby@isd709.org, paul.sandholm@isd709.org, jill.lofald@isd709.org, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, alanna.oswald@isd709.org, sally.trnka@isd709.org

Hi All,

I would like to ask that the school board NOT cancel sports for the fall OR winter season this year.

The Kids really need the physical outlet and the socializing and fellowship with their peers!

My son has been doing distance learning since last March and then off all summer and now distance learning again. At this point he is feeling very isolated.

The only thing he looks forward to is the basketball practices and games that he has been doing with a NON-ISD 709 group.

Now that the basketball season is about to start, it would be devastating for his emotional health to lose that opportunity to play with his peers.

I have complete trust in the coaching staff that they will organize practice and gym time in the safest way possible, and will temporarily shut things down if needed.

**PLEASE DON'T CANCEL THE WINTER SPORTS SEASON!**

Thanks,

Rhett Bonner



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## Distance learning

1 message

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**Casey Brock**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020 :

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>

To whom it may concern,

I have three children in the school district who are all forced to do distance learning which is working terribly. My children are having to teach themselves. I really don't know why we are paying taxes for the teachers that don't even need to be there as my children either teach themselves or we as parents are doing the teaching. As to why my children cannot go to school makes no sense. The 140 students that require daycare is not a valid reason to make my children have to do distance learning. I also believe that the school district is overreacting to the pandemic as the teachers are afraid. The teachers union controls the district. If we are not willing to let our children go back to some form of in person education then we might as well not have a school district because I can get all the education material for all my children online.

V/r,

Mr Casey Brock



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**School board meeting public comment**

1 message

**Sarah Burt**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Hello,

My name is Sarah. I have 1 son in 10th grade at East and 1 son in 7th grade at ordean. This school year has been extremely difficult for us as a family. The middle schooler is borderline failing 2 classes and says regularly he hates distance learning. My high schooler is failing 4 classes and has more than a dozen missing assignments. He also says he hates distance learning. We have all shed tears there has been fighting and arguing and punishments.. We as a family spend about 30-40 hours per week on school work. I do not feel or think or believe the education they are getting is on par with other districts/schools.

My high schoolers IEP is not being followed and actually I received an email from one teacher 3 weeks in COMPLETELY unaware he even had an IEP. I believe my middle schooler is in need of evaluation for needing an IEP however I have no clue where to go with that during distance learning. Both boys have diagnosed ADHD inattentive and are having a hard time. The middle schooler has never logged into a google meet and he doesn't know how to do it. I had to come home for lunch to teach the high schooler to log in For google meets however he has a difficult time managing any sort of schedule. I spend my lunch breaks coming home to check on them and we do school work from the time I get home after work until bedtime. Usually on Tuesdays before everything is due we are up until 11pm or 12am trying to get everything done. Their dad works nights so he is asleep during the day and we have joint custody so they do some school work on weekends too while they are there. We are taking things one day at a time and trying to get caught up before the end of the semester and I have submitted for 3 days off of work to help them get caught up before the end of the semester. We are very hopeful that the would be able to move to hybrid or some sort of in person learning for next semester. If we could afford private school I would enroll them immediately.

Sarah Burt



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**ISD 709 ATHLETICS**

1 message

**Tiffany Schubitzke**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org, david.kirby@isd709.org, paul.sandholm@isd709.org, jill.lofald@isd709.org, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, alanna.oswald@isd709.org, sally.trnka@isd709.org

ISD 709 School Board Members,

I am a parent of 2 student athletes at Duluth East High School, and I am writing with my concerns of the vote potentially coming in the next few weeks. Athletics and extracurricular activities are not only a positive part of a high school career, but also essential for their growth and mental health. I saw a drastic change in my child's anxiety and depression once sports and activities resumed. Without in person school they have no other outlet. As a community, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety of all members, however high school sports are not what is driving the covid cases up and how can we as adults tell these kids that it is on them to take the full brunt of the entire community? Why are they being punished for increased numbers? There is no data that shows that numbers have increased due to sports being played. There are many factors, including an increase in college students returning that have no bearing on our children's activities. We would be the only district to not be allowed to play, even though the MSHL has approved ALL of MN to play, and our kids will watch all surrounding areas including Marshall, Hermantown, Proctor, Two Harbors and Esko continue to be allowed to play. The families in the surrounding areas are also shopping and working in our district and yet our students will pay the price for all of St.Louis County. That seems like an inconceivable responsibility and punishment to be put on our students. These students have been diligent in staying within their "pods" and only having exposure to each other and the number of positive cases is not going to decrease if they aren't allowed to play a few games. What will be more likely to happen is to see a drop in our student numbers as some will be forced to open enroll to surrounding schools or private schools which is already becoming an issue due to all online schooling. Many students rely on scholarships to be able to even attend college, this is not something that will only immediately affect them, but could have an impact on their futures as well. Please take into consideration what this will do to these students mentally as well as physically and be the voice for them, not against them.

Thank you for your time,  
Tiffany Schubitzke



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Hybrid learning grades 6-12**

1 message

**Kristy Erickson**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

I recently learned that hybrid learning was taken away from grades 6-12 due to the childcare mandate. As an essential healthcare worker and a mother of 3, I understand the needs for childcare in elementary age children during a pandemic, however the solution should not be at the expense of the older students. I filled out the survey prior to the school year for all 3 of my kids opting into hybrid learning as I felt some teacher/student contact and structure was necessary for my kids to succeed. My stance has not changed. Currently I feel like my kids are still on vacation to a certain extent, with very little structure in the virtual learning program provided by ISD.709. They are not getting the education they need - this is UNACCEPTABLE! The school district needs to come up with a better solution.

Sincerely,  
Kristy Erickson



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**Extra-curricular participation decision: Important**

1 message

**Dave Thompson**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

Cc: Thompson David

Kathy Horner

Dear Duluth School Board Members:

The decision you face tomorrow carries with it a great deal of weight and consequence for many young student/athletes. Please consider the following points as you determine what to do regarding extra-curricular sports in the midst of this current scenario. I am a head coach and just completed a successful soccer season with no cancellations or outbreaks of infection due to our competition and practices because we followed guidelines and maintained integrity within those guidelines. Sports are possible and safe if rules are followed. Please consider the following points as they all underscore the importance of allowing young people to participate in their chosen activity safely.

- 1) Sports/extracurricular activities improve student's overall physical and mental health.
2. Our family has taken extra precautions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and our child should not be punished due to others not taking the spread of the virus as seriously.
3. Schools like the one I work for and coach at have already taken great precautions and have implemented strong strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while allowing safe participation of student-athletes. Local sports/extracurricular activities have had an overwhelming low number of positive cases COVID-19.
4. Sports are a significant source of healthy social interaction and motivation for our young people who need all the support and resources they can get at this time.
5. Sports/extracurricular activities are not the source of the problem. The participants should not be denied their activity as a consequence of other factors outside of their control and which have no bearing on the safety of their specific activity.
6. Sports/extracurricular activities are the primary source of "normal" for our young people. Due to the fact that our high school students are already in "distance learning", they should not be considered as the main source of the spread or rise of cases.
7. Simple measures, if followed, can significantly mitigate the risk for everyone, not just participants.

Please consider all of these points strongly, knowing the extra stress and anxiety all students are facing in the midst of this uncertain time and that allowing them to complete and participate is an incredibly important factor in their overall health and well being. Please vote to allow sports to continue, knowing it can be done safely, for the health and well being of our student/athletes who deserve the chance to play their chosen sport and represent the Duluth School District.

Sincerely,

David and Kathanne Thompson



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Continuing fall sports

1 message

Samantha

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

**It was brought to our attention that there was going to be voting regarding allowing continuing of fall athletics. I would like to share these points which we strongly believe. We vote YES to keeping fall sports going!**

1. Sports/extracurricular activities improve your child's overall health through physical activity. It also improves your child's mental health. Physical and mental health is important to your family.
2. Your family has taken extra precautions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and your participant should not be punished due to others not taking the spread of the virus as seriously.
3. Schools have already taken great precautions and have implemented strong strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while allowing safe participation of student-athletes. Local sports/extracurricular activities have had an overwhelming low number of positive cases COVID-19.
4. You fear that shutdown of sports/extracurricular activities will cause a disruption of friendships that your child depends on.
5. This decision could lead families to open-enroll in neighboring school districts to participate in these sports/extracurricular activities.
6. Sports/extracurricular activities are not the source of the problem. The participants should not be at the mercy of the community.
7. Sports/extracurricular activities is the primary source of "normal" for your participant at the moment. Due to the fact that our high school students are already in "distance learning", they should not be considered as the main source of the spread or rise of cases.
8. We should consider other solutions first; such as playing games without fans, live-streaming all games, have stricter mask policy in practices, have smaller pod sizes in practices, etc.

Sincerely,

**John & Samantha Pykkonen**



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Potential Shut Down of School Sports

1 message

**Angela Lahti**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org

Bcc: public.comment@isd709.org

First of all, thank you for taking the time to read this.

I am writing to you regarding my concern with the potential shutdown for High School Sports. As a parent to four children in the Duluth School District, a parent of a student athlete at Duluth East High School, as well as a Healthcare worker in our downtown Essentia campus, I am urging you to reconsider possibly shutting down sports this fall.

Allowing these student athletes to play has been such an incredible opportunity for them. They are happier, healthier, and both emotionally and mentally in the best place they have been since the shutdown started. Being able to play sports has given them an outlet they so desperately need!

Our kids, without any warning, have had to deal with not going to school since March, have not been able to be around friends, have had numerous events cancelled, and have had to pivot and learn school virtually full time. Allowing the ability to participate in sports this fall has finally been a little bit of normalcy for these kids.

As adults we have also had numerous changes, but for these kids, being able to be around friends and play the sports they love means the world to them.

All teams are practicing and performing in the safest way possible and these student athletes are currently not the reason for the increasing spread in the community.

As parents and educators, all we want is the best for our children. No question. But please reconsider shutting things down. Numbers are going to continue to climb as winter progresses and flu season starts. Right now is NOT the time to shut things down again. It would be a premature decision.

Covid is a very real threat to many, but the families, coaches, and players are taking ALL the precautions to prevent any spread within our school district and community.

My son personally, as well as his teammates, have been taking the appropriate measures to keep the players and coaches safe. We daily do health checks and screens, they take precautions on the football field by utilizing masks and hand sanitizer, they use small groups at practice, and it strictly takes place outdoors. We take extreme precautions to prevent the spread by limiting any contact to people outside our immediate family.

For the duration of the football season, my son has voluntarily chosen to limit his outings to home and football to avoid getting sick and help ensure they can play the entire season.

His football team is family to him. Playing football is something he looks forward to the entire year. Any parent and player of any sport this year can attest to the joy and happiness it brings these kids.

These students train hard, work hard, and do everything in their power they can to continue the season. My heart breaks for these seniors that only have a few weeks left of their fall season. They don't get any do-overs. Please let them continue to play.

Our Football team, as well as our family, have taken the precautions to allow safe participation for these athletes. These student athletes should NOT be punished for COMMUNITY members who do not take Covid as seriously.

The teams in our Duluth area have not been the source of the spread. We should therefore not be at the mercy of the community to keep numbers down. Our local sports have had an overwhelming low number of positive cases of Covid. Why should they be shut down when everyone who is playing is healthy?

Other counties in Minnesota have not taken any measure this EXTREME. There are counties such as Itasca County, Hennepin County, and Stearns County that have higher rates of positive COVID-19 cases, but they have continued to play this fall. There are ZERO other schools in the state of MN with higher cases than St. Louis that has shut things down. Wisconsin schools are playing out their seasons as well and numbers are higher in Wisconsin than they are in Minnesota.

Covid has disrupted so much of our lives, please let the kids play and finish out their seasons.

My greatest fear with the community COVID percentages increasing, is that you will choose to shut down school sports and they will not be restarted and will be shut down for months if not the entire school year. These kids finally got a

10/19/2020

Duluth Public Schools Mail - Potential Shut Down of School Sports

little bit of normalcy back. They need their coaches and role models more than ever right now.

It was a mistake to not start Volleyball and Football at the end of August like normal. Please don't make the mistake of shutting down fall sports right now. Please let these student athletes finish out the season this year.

Thank you for your time in reading this.

- Angela



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Continuation of the fall sports season

1 message

Leslie Anderson

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

To whom it may concern,

We are submitting this email as a formal request that you please allow for the continuation of the 2020 fall sports season(s) for our local Duluth area student athletes amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Although it may seem trivial to some, the ability to participate in something 'normal' this fall as a member of one of the many fall sports and extracurricular programs has and continues to be an invaluable means of social interaction for our students.

Provided we remain diligent in maintaining necessary heightened precautions, continue safe practices and procedures, and comply with that we all continue to maintain ongoing COVID-19 pandemic



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Continuation of the fall sports season...continued

1 message

Leslie Anderson

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

To whom it may concern (again),

...sorry, looks like we sent the previous email message before it was completed.

In summary, please consider in your decision making process regarding the continuation of fall sports and extracurricular programs what you would be taking away from our local student athletes.

Respectfully,

Dean and Leslie Anderson

Duluth East High School student parents



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Sports**

1 message

**jenny critchley**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

To whom it may concern.

I wrote to you as a very concerned parent. I have a son in the 9th grade here in the Duluth School district.

I know COVID is a real concern to our county. I appreciate the the that we all need to be concerned with this.

I however strongly recommend we also consider our youths mental health. They have already had school days taken away.

I have a child who absolutely needs his sports. You see he is special needs and having that out key is vital to his mental health. It keeps him active and in communication with his friends. This communication with his friends is a safe place. They follow the rules and guidelines.

I plead with you to follow the state guidelines. Please don't take away their sports,

I am scared honestly on what will happen if my son along with others who need this outlet.

I can tell you when he was able to start football back up his mental health did a turn around. Now to take it away along with other sports that he will play on the winter makes me nervous of the downward spiral he will fall down.

His case worker and therapist also are concerned for him and what this will do.

Please take all this information into consideration when you vote. I know you are trying to keep us all safe from COVID and I thank you for that. But pleSe keep our kids Mental Health safe as well.

Thank you

Jennifer Critchley Lapcinski

[Sent from Yahoo for iPhone](#)



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## Continuance or Cancellation of Sports Programs

1 message

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Jack And Kathy

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, rosalie.ioemierkemp@isd709.org, david.kirby@isd709.org, paul.sandholm@isd709.org, jill.lofald@isd709.org, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, alanna.oswald@isd709.org, sally.trnka@isd709.org

We are writing to encourage you to allow all sports programs, those currently in progress and those beginning in the next few weeks at tomorrow's school board meeting.

No other school district in Minnesota have taken these extreme measures. There are ways in which the sports can be played with strong strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19; such as playing games without fans or live-streaming all games.

Our grandson has played from July until this weekend on a AAU team which had strategies in place that mitigated the spread of this virus and had no positive COVID cases.

We know you'll carefully consider these facts and let our young people continue with these activities that promote good mental and physical health.

Sincerely,

Kathy and Jack Horner

Sent from my iPad



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**Fwd: School Board Decision to Continue Sports**

1 message

**Kimberly Lakhan**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, rosalie.ioefflerkemp@isd709.org, david.kirby@isd709.org, paul.sandholm@isd709.org, jill.lofald@isd709.org, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, alanna.oswald@isd709.org, sally.trnka@isd709.org

Dear School Board members,

Thank you for all you do for our students. As a parent who is new to sports (our senior son just joined this year), it is wonderful to see him enjoying himself. However, as a health care provider, I fully support your efforts to keep our children safe. Their time playing is valuable but fleeting compared to the risks COVID poses to them, family members, and the greater community. We do not yet know or understand the long-term consequences of an infection, even an asymptomatic one. It is simply not worth it.

Thank you again,  
Kimberly Lakhan

On Oct 18, 2020, at 1:07 PM,

wrote:

**I am personally sharing this email with you for awareness. This email is NOT coming to you from the Touchdown Club.**

I am emailing you to inform you that this week the School Board will be discussing the continuance or cancellation of ALL sports programs currently in process (football, volleyball, soccer, cross country) and those beginning in the next few weeks due to the rise of positive COVID-19 cases in St. Louis County.

In order to restart activities after a potential shut down the following would have to transpire: (1) the sport would still have to be in session, (2) case rates would need to be below 30 for three weeks in a row, and (3) those three weeks would need to demonstrate a downward trend in community spread. Quite simply, my fear is that if sports are shut down, they will remain shut down for the duration of the school year.

There are ZERO other schools in the state of Minnesota that have taken measures that are this extreme at this point. There are schools in Itasca County (Grand Rapids), Hennepin County (Minneapolis), Olmsted County (Rochester), Stearns County (St. Cloud) that have higher rates of positive COVID-19 cases, but have continued to play their sports and allowed students to participate in extracurricular activities.

If you feel strongly about participation in sports and extracurricular activities, I would encourage you to email our school board.

**Within your email, feel free to use these points:**

1. Sports/extracurricular activities improve your child's overall health through physical activity. It also improves your child's mental health. Physical and mental health is important to your family.
2. Your family has taken extra precautions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and your participant should not be punished due to others not taking the spread of the virus as seriously.
3. Schools have already taken great precautions and have implemented strong strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while allowing safe participation of student-athletes. Local sports/extracurricular activities have had an overwhelming low number of positive cases COVID-19.
4. You fear that shutdown of sports/extracurricular activities will cause a disruption of friendships that your child depends on.
5. This decision could lead families to open-enroll in neighboring school districts to participate in these sports/extracurricular activities.



6. Sports/extracurricular activities are not the source of the problem. The participants should not be at the mercy of the community.
7. Sports/extracurricular activities is the primary source of "normal" for your participant at the moment. Due to the fact that our high school students are already in "distance learning", they should not be considered as the main source of the spread or rise of cases.
8. We should consider other solutions first; such as playing games without fans, live-streaming all games, have stricter mask policy in practices, have smaller pod sizes in practices, etc.

Keep in mind, this is completely voluntary. In no way am I suggesting that you should send an email to our school board. However, our season (along with many other student-athletes participating in other sports/extracurricular activities) may be hanging in the balance at this point. If you feel strongly about your child participating in sports/extracurricular activities, please consider sending an email.

**You can send your emails to the following addresses:**

[public.comment@isd709.org](mailto:public.comment@isd709.org)  
[rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org](mailto:rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org)  
[david.kirby@isd709.org](mailto:david.kirby@isd709.org)  
[paul.sandholm@isd709.org](mailto:paul.sandholm@isd709.org)  
[jill.lofald@isd709.org](mailto:jill.lofald@isd709.org)  
[kelly.durickeder@isd709.org](mailto:kelly.durickeder@isd709.org)  
[alanna.oswald@isd709.org](mailto:alanna.oswald@isd709.org)  
[sally.trnka@isd709.org](mailto:sally.trnka@isd709.org)



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Honor roll student failing in current system.**

1 message

**Michelle Dinehart**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020 .

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Good afternoon.

I am writing this email because I want to let you know that your current system in place is failing the students of ISD709. My daughter is a 7th grader at Ordean East middle school . She spent her 6th grade year fully on the honor roll at Ordean East Middle School. This school year the rollout of an online program came just 2 short weeks before school started. With little training for educators, no training for students or parents. She has been working at home but, assignments have been lost through canvas or very difficult to find . I am currently working from home in witnessing this 1st hand. As a parent, it is difficult to navigate canvas, as well. One example is she been working on math yet nothing was turned in since the start of school. I reached out to the math teacher. That particular teacher's response was they were not questioning it because so many kids have dropped off. We came to Ordean East Middle S.chool last year from a private school located in Duluth. I will tell you this as a parent, I will be calling Monday morning to see where I can place my child either in a another district or a private school. I cannot afford to have my student fail or repeat the 7th grade again next year. It is a very tough decision to make as a parent and very sad and upsetting . The school district talks about "No Child Left Behind" but isn't that exactly what we are doing here when we have honor roll students who are currently failing their grade level? I find it very hard to sit and watch children at Ordean East Middle School for a daycare when the purpose of that school is to be utilized for the education of the children living in this community. The district has voice Gov Walz can hear. I do not, but this is wrong. It is at the expense of children's education.

Please hear our voices and do you part to get our children back in school. Other schools are doing just fine in the area with on-site education. Two Harbors, Marshall and private schools are some examples.

Thanks,  
Michelle Dinehart



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Decision to Continue Sports

1 message

Jodi Paulson 1

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org, public.comment@isd709.org, david.kirby@isd709.org, jill.lofald@isd709.org, paul.sandholm@isd709.org, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, sally.trnka@isd709.org, alanna.oswald@isd709.org  
Cc: dpaulson32@yahoo.com, Jodi Paulson <jjpaulson44@gmail.com>

Dear ISD 709 School Board,

Every age group has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. People have lost their jobs, lost loved ones, and struggled to maintain some sense of normalcy while life feels anything but normal. However, you don't often hear about how the pandemic has specifically impacted teens. When it comes to mental health, adolescents are among the most vulnerable demographic. With the possibility of our district cancelling sports/extracurricular activities we greatly fear not only for the loss of activity but for the mental health of our children. It is our understanding that at this point there are ZERO other schools in the state of Minnesota that have taken measures that are this extreme.

This fall has been extremely difficult for our teens. We are the only school district in the area that is full time distant learning. Sports/extracurricular activities are the only source of "normal" for our children at this point in time. We often hear about what last year's seniors lost. What about this year's? Our students don't even have a school to go to, not to mention sporting events to watch, homecoming, spirit weeks, assemblies... all social activities have been completely erased. Now you are considering taking the last piece of normalcy from them? And being the only district in the state to do so?

Our family has taken COVID-19 seriously and are taking proper precautions to mitigate the spread. Our children should not be punished due to others not taking the spread of the virus as seriously. This summer our sons have participated in numerous basketball tournaments, At each of these events there were expectations and safety precautions in place for athletes and fans. Like these tournaments, our schools have already taken great precautions and have implemented strong strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while allowing safe participation of student-athletes. Local school-sponsor programs have overwhelmingly had very few positive cases of COVID-19. Sports/extracurricular activities are not the source of the problem. The participants should not be at the mercy of the community.

We strongly urge you to consider the physical and mental health of our teens before taking such drastic measures to shut down sports/extracurricular activities. The children in our community need some normalcy in their lives. Please don't take away this last piece.

Sincerely,

Damien and Jodi Paulson

parents of Noah (2021) and Rocco (2023)



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## High school activities and athletics

1 message

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**Patty Beech**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Dear Duluth School Board Members,

As the parent of two Duluth East graduates, I urge you to do everything you can to maintain high school activities and athletics at this time, and to follow the guidance of the Minnesota State High School League and the Minnesota Department of Education's guidance on high school activities and athletics.

Like so many others, my son lost much of his senior year in the spring of 2020. It was devastating, and the loss of all the sports and activities that made high school meaningful and fun for him, made it hard for him to stay motivated to do online school work. Particularly painful was the loss of his senior lacrosse season, and the loss of his connection with the teammates he had played lacrosse with since sixth grade. When the Wolfpack was finally able to have a short season in July, those daily practices were a highlight of his summer. When the team played two tournaments in August, he finally got the ending to his senior year that he had been longing for....with his coaches, his fellow players, and the few parents who watched them play. Everyone followed protocols and everyone stayed healthy!

We are a family that takes COVID-19 prevention very seriously. We wear our masks, we avoid gatherings, and we practice social distancing. But, as a parent, I can see the pain that the loss of in-person school, social gatherings, sports, and other school activities is having on young people.

I applaud teachers, advisors, and coaches who are working hard every day to figure out: "What CAN we allow these students to do in the safest way possible?". There are creative and safe ways for kids to play sports together and to put on plays and to do music. Let's keep finding them!

We shouldn't shut down sports and other activities before we have to. Our childrens' mental health and social needs are important, and I urge you to consider, along with the focus on COVID-19 prevention, the critical importance of meaningful activities on students' wellbeing.

Thank you for your service to Duluth's students during this very challenging time.

Patty Beech-Dziuk

Duluth, MN



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**ISD 709-It is time to return to learning**

1 message

**KASEY BROCK**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

I am writing with concerns regarding my two high school children and one middle school child not being allowed to learn to their full abilities in Duluth ISD 709. We are an active duty military family. My children have moved and lived in over nine different states and eleven different homes around the country. I have lost count how many schools they have attended over the course of their childhood. They have braved through overseas deployments, where their father was deployed to the true "front lines" for nearly a year in Afghanistan. My children have had to say final goodbyes to countless best friends their entire childhood. Our family moved to Duluth and bought our home here last year, July 2019, after my husband retired from the military. We felt that Duluth would offer the best education opportunities for our children. We have been nothing but disappointed in ISD 709. I believe that my children being denied a worthy education far exceeds any past frustration or difficult life event that they have experienced. My children strive to be challenged. This catastrophe that Duluth ISD 709 calls "Distance Learning" is pitiful. My three children are assigned a week's worth of "busy" work every Thursday and it is due the following Wednesday. Do you have any idea how much stress or anxiety having an entire week's worth of schoolwork thrown at you at once causes a 13, 15 and 16 year old student? I have watched how my once driven, 4.0 daughter, who craves learning, is now having difficulty getting out of bed before 10:00am. She feels as if she has no purpose anymore. She misses human connection, seeing her teachers and learning face to face with fellow classmates. My high school children are concerned about how this, lack of teaching and one on one will affect their future college education. Looking back on how our family has managed all of our many moves around the country with the military, one thing was constant and most important. This was our children's education. Duluth ISD 709, you are one disappointment and frustration after another. We are now considering selling our home and relocating to a community that puts education for our children first. Wake up Duluth ISD 709 and do your job or let someone else do your job the way it should be done. The children of Duluth deserve far better than what you are offering. Stop disappointing and forgetting the children of our community.



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**RETURN TO IN SCHOOL LEARNING**

1 message

**Holly Taylor**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

Reply-To: Holly Taylor

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

The behavior of this School District is unacceptable and appalling. I recently moved to Duluth and if I had only known how inadequate this school district was, I most certainly would have moved to another school. This school is simply making a difficult situation a complete nightmare of chaos and inadequacy. To think a SCHOOL is taking away our children's right to learn is mind blowing!!! Childcare needs to be removed from the school immediately. This needs to be adjusted so the rightful children that should be attending the school for education can do so. That this one particular school is unable to figure this out is asinine. A school full of educators cannot figure this out. I fully support any action against this school district that is needed to get our kids back to being educated!

-Holly Taylor

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## High School Activities

1 message

Kristin Kartch

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

ISD709 School Board Members,

I am the mother of a sophomore at Denfeld High School. I am frustrated. I am angry. I am tearful. I am terrified.

The distance "learning" is not going well. How can there be learning when there is no teaching? Giving assignments to students once a week is NOT teaching. My student cannot reach a teacher by phone or email during their stated "hours" when clarification for assignments is needed. There is no conversation between students and teachers. There is no synchronous learning. No Zoom classes. No social interaction to promote and discuss content of lessons. What a disappointment this has been!! It is shameful what is happening to these kids!

And now you want to take from them the only thing that is "normal" in their life?! Activities and sports are the one thing they have. The one thing they look forward to every day. They NEED an outlet. They NEED to be a part of SOMETHING. They NEED to feel NORMAL for a few hours. **Let them participate. Let them play. Do not delay their seasons. They need this.**

Duluth Covid numbers are on the rise. Duluth Covid numbers are higher than neighboring communities because our population is much greater and because we have 3 universities in our community. The highest infection rate is in college students age 20-24. High school students age 15-19 comprise only 15% of the total infections in our community with zero deaths in this age group statewide. Why would you choose to punish these kids by taking away their activities? Sports and activities are necessary to get them through this horrible period in their young lives. They've already lost at least 2 quarters of their education with more to follow. Haven't they lost enough already? **LET THEM PARTICIPATE** in their activities. It's all they've got.

Thank you for your time,  
Kristin



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**In school and athletic participation concerns**

1 message

**Ruth Jimenez**

Sun, Oct 18, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Dear Duluth School Board,

I would like to add our family to the growing number of concerned Duluth families that would like to see students return to in school learning on a hybrid basis and would like to see the sports for fall continue. It is very important that students, faculty and staff are safe, however, it is not fair to keep students out of school based primarily on the needs of families needing child care.

Also, if Mn guidelines are 55/10,000 why is our district imposing a different guideline of 33/10,000? My son is in fall sports, it is a healthy outlet for him especially with school not being in person, at all.

More importantly than sports though, is our childrens' education. The at home curriculum is not sufficient to provide an adequate education for our kids. This is their junior year, the most important year for them academically. They have very little interaction with teachers on line and with other students. They are missing out on their high school experience. I empathise with everyone involved, and I am sure teachers are doing their best. However, I feel as soon as possible, that students - high school students in our case - need to return to school asap - even for just one day per week! I don't understand why elementary students are able to do hybrid and not the older students who are perfectly capable of wearing masks and following social distancing, as they have to at their jobs, or in sports or when volunteering.

Thank you for your consideration, and thank you for all you do for our community.

A concerned parent,

Ruth Jimenez





Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Athletics and Activities Support

1 message

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**Amy Carlson**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Dear Duluth School Board Members,

As parents of two student athletes at Duluth East High School, I am writing out of concern for the continuation of sports and activities the remainder of this school year.

In a school year that is anything but normal, fall sports have been the ONLY part of our kids' lives that feels somewhat normal (we have a girls' soccer player and a football player). While their seasons have been cut short, they have both cherished every practice and game they have been able to participate in, even while suffering tough losses; girls' soccer especially, as they immediately lost two weeks of their season due to positive COVID-19 tests. These teams have played with so much heart this season - our kids and their teammates truly understand how fortunate they are to be able to play.

Our kids also compete for East in the winter (Alpine Ski) and spring (Softball and Trapshooting). This year, when they have no other social outlet, sports are their sanity (they are not alone, as clearly evidenced by the number of students trying new activities), and they respect the safety rules put in place by the MSHSL. In a school year where every day feels the same to them, where they feel completely isolated, where they do not get to experience high school like they should, please give Duluth students the chance to feel like a part of the school community, if only for a few hours of the day. I am fully confident the students in our district will comply with whatever safety measures are in place in order to continue to participate in their activities.

We are concerned that shutting down activities and athletics means they will be shut down indefinitely, and the winter and spring seasons will be jeopardized as well. As far as we can tell, no other schools in the state of Minnesota (even those with higher covid-19 rates), are considering this move to completely shut down activities and athletics. Please allow activities and athletics to continue in the district, continue to mandate safety precautions and behaviors, and most of all, encourage our kids to be kids by allowing them to participate in sports and activities that bring our students and our community together.

Amy Carlson  
Duluth East High School Parent



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**please reconsider**

1 message

**Ogston, Jena**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

To whom it may concern:

Having a child in the Hermantown school district and also in ISD 709, I see a stark contrast in the motivation, learning and mental health in my child who is able to attend school and involved in sports compared to the other who is staring at a computer trying to find the motivation to learn.

The emails I receive from ISD709 administration vs. ISD700 are starkly different. ISD700 is focused on our kids, their education and mental health. ISD709 is vague, non-transparent and seemingly concerned about day care for 200 kids more than the 4,000 students attending.

Where is the scientific evidence concerning the spread of COVID in schools? In addition, please consider the evidence concerning mental health of our students.

Lastly, I am quite confident if you ask the teachers how much the kids are learning and participating in this online environment, you would find this is not education. Being a graduate professor at CSS, our students are really struggling in a hybrid environment yet you are asking teenagers to stay focused on a screen and have how many hours of screen time?

Please reconsider.



Jena Ogston, PhD, PT

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Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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**Sports activities 10/19/20 vs. covid 19**

1 message

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**Donald Smith**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Dear School board members,

Please continue to follow the MNDOH recommendations when it comes to covid -19 and our kids. I have two children that are in multiple sports, but I do not think it's crucial that they play sports if the numbers are too high. My boys Safety and health is most important.

Thank you,

*Don Smith*



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**In-Person Learning**

1 message

**Svobodny, Jon M**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

I have a son in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and a daughter in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. For the first time ever, I'm hearing them tell me they hate school! They aren't learning in a way that works for them, they're either done right away for the day or they're behind because they don't understand what's being asked of them.

I totally get the notion of trying to keep people safe, but the damage we're doing to our young kids with this mess of an online learning environment is unforgivable. MOST kids need to be in-person to learn. These kids are our future, we can't just keep hiding from this virus. Kids are back playing sports again and living life. Please get them back in the classroom where they belong, if they can play sports they can be in school. This virus is going to make its way around and will find vulnerable people whether kids are in school or not. The cost isn't worth the benefit here.

Thank you

**Jon Svobodny**

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Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**School**

1 message

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**Ryan Saburn**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Hello, my name is Ryan Saburn. I go to school at Ordeal East High School. I'm in the ninth grade. I do not like the way school is going about right now it makes it more difficult for me to get my work done. If we were in school I would be able to get it done more efficiently. During the pandemic, it made it harder for everyone but we kept going forth and got through it we should be in school right now.

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Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Public Comment

1 message

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**Sharon Scheidel**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Hello -

Thank you for taking my comments.

While I am empathetic to all those involved in planning for this difficult and evolving situation, I do think decisions were made that could have been better.

- 1 - although this is in the past, that hybrid learning did not start until week 3 is absurd and shows weak pre-planning.
- 2 - it is disappointing that Tier 1 daycare seems to be the top priority district. If this volume of students can attend a child care system by the school, the school should/could have put those resources into smaller class sizes. (I am a parent of a kindergartener and second grader and our family does not qualify for Tier 1 childcare.)
- 3 - other school districts have identified key ages that should be in school more than less. This includes creative planning and additional hiring to ensure children K-3 are in school 4 days a week with a hybrid model for grades 4-8. High school students need to attend minimum 1 day a week for accountability. Seniors should be in school a minimum 1 day a week so these kids are able to finish off their school career with somewhat of an opportunity for social opportunities and closure.
- 4 - for the hybrid learners, under the current model it is a severe oversight of the school to have an A Group attend Mon/Tues with B Group on Thurs/Fri. My children, as the B Group, have already missed 2 days of instruction due to MEA and will miss Thanksgiving and Christmas, a total of 6 days. "A Group" learners miss 1 day. From Sept 24 until Christmas, "B" learners attend school 22 days. From Sept 21 until Christmas, "A" learners attend school 27 days. This difference is significant with so few instructional opportunities.

I want to be clear that our family is grateful to the administrators, teachers and school district personnel for their hard work and dedication. However, in-person learning is essential. It is possible to navigate this pandemic safely. Let's move forward with positive, creative and thoughtful solutions with the goal of getting all of our students back in school for instruction.

Thank you.  
Sharon Scheidel



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**ISD 709**

1 message

**Heidi Guenther**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

Reply-To: Heidi Guenther

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

I am a concerned parent questioning those in charge of making decisions that impact my child and the children of ISD709. You have gone too far and are overstepping the rights of the public. Why are we the only district in the state with mandates that don't make sense. We need to get kids back in school and back to some sort normal. I have two daughters that have already had COVID- they should be in school full time. We need to begin moving forward. My children are far too isolated and the damage that is being done by this isolation of all children in ISD709 should be a concern to you. I don't need ISD709 providing safety for my children. As parents, my husband and I can do that. You are charged with educating my child and you have failed to do that for the past six months.

Please know that if you opt to cut all sports for the remainder of the school year this will be detrimental to the mental health and well-being of our children. Sports/extracurricular activities improve my child's overall health through physical activity, social interaction, and learning to be a team player. My daughter has had COVID, we have fulfilled our quarantine time period and being held back from school and sports is extremely frustrating. We take the spread of COVID very seriously and have done our part to keep our friends and family safe. We believe our daughter should not be punished due to others not taking the spread of the virus seriously. I believe coaches have taken great precautions and have implemented strong strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while allowing safe participation of student-athletes. You can see the participation in local sports and extracurricular activities has had an overwhelming low number of positive COVID-19 cases. The shutdown of school has already impacted the friendships my daughters have. If you were to take away sports/extracurricular activities, this will cause an even bigger disruption to the friendships that my children depend on.

I sure hope you take time to consider the impacts of your decisions. All around the country children have returned to school and returned to sports - in a safe and well planned manner. Why are we different. Why? This decision could lead families to open-enroll in neighboring school districts to participate in these sports/extracurricular activities - or to flat out move from Duluth (which our family has considered)!! Please know that sports/extracurricular activities are not the source of the problem. The participants should not be at the mercy of the community. Sports/extracurricular activities is the primary source of "normal" for my daughter at the moment. Due to the fact that our high school students are already in "distance learning", they should not be considered as the main source of the spread or rise of cases. Please consider other solutions first; such as live-streaming all games, or having smaller pod sizes in practices. Somehow other areas of the country have figured this out - we need to do better for our kids. Doing nothing out of fear is not the answer.



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**Sports participation**

1 message

**Carol Duncan**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

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Dear School board members,

I am sending this email with regard to continued sports participation in our schools. I understand it decisions regarding in person participation in sports and activities is difficult during these unprecedented times and that the health and wellbeing of our students, families and communities is extremely important. With the extended period of social isolation and limited access to physical activities during this pandemic, there has been a steady increase in depression and suicide rates throughout our nation. Although it is important to do all that we can to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is also extremely important that we address other factors involved in the health and wellbeing of our students. Participation in sports helps improve and maintain both the fitness of our students and mental health, both of which are on the decline. With that, I am asking that you strongly consider allowing Winter sports that primarily take place outdoors to occur for our students, such as Cross country and alpine skiing, as it is easy for social distancing in these sports and students typically wear face masks.

Our family has taken extra precautions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and feel that my child should not be punished due to others not taking the spread of the virus as seriously. Our family will keep our child from attending practices if anyone in the family is ill and will have a rapid COVID test done immediately if signs/symptoms are present. Throughout the state, Schools have already taken great precautions and have implemented strong strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while allowing safe participation of student-athletes. Local sports/extracurricular activities have had an overwhelming low number of positive cases COVID-19. I strongly fear that shutdown of sports/extracurricular activities will not only cause a disruption of friendships that my child depends on, but a continued decline in the physical and mental health as well. Sports/extracurricular activities are not the source of the problem. For almost all of our students, Sports/extracurricular activities are the only primary source of "normalcy" during this unprecedented time and due to the fact that our high school students are already in "distance learning", they should not be considered as the main source of the spread or rise of cases.

I'm asking to please seriously consider allowing winter sports to occur for our students.

Carol Duncan

Therapeutic Foster Care Case Manager





Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## School plan

1 message

SHEA Dave

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

School board members,

First, I'd like to thank you all for your service and I know these times and decisions have been difficult. **I do believe, however we are unintentionally causing some effects to kids that, for some, may be irreversible even though we are trying to protect them.**

I've had three kids in the Duluth school district. All three have been very different; one having to struggle but still achieve, one that things come easy to for learning and one that we're trying to teach and master basic learning skills with. I graduated from Saint Thomas Academy considered a premier learning institution and I believe my kids have received just as good of an education at Denfeld as I did at STA.

**I have been very happy with the school district however our current plan is definitely leaving kids behind.** Perception is reality and whether teachers, the school board, parents want to believe it or not it is the perception is that the education kids are receiving around us is superior to what we are offering. Whether we want to believe it or not, it's hard to argue with.

Most parents have to work as they are essential. Some families, including ours, have had to take a leave using FMLA so that they can assist their kids education even though it a pay cut and hurts them financially. Most parents aren't trained to teach children. **EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL as well and we need to do better than we have.**

My youngest has zoom type meetings several times a week where there is supposed to be 13 kids but there's typically only two or three that attend. There was one this morning and currently there are three. **The truth is, unfortunately, that the kids of lesser means are the ones suffering the most from the remote learning.** There's no way to argue any different.

My senior has all AP classes and those are going ok (Not as good as he would receive in person but, ok nonetheless) . **However, we shouldn't have such disparity between kids based on where they are on the learning spectrum. I worry for the kids and the teachers of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders next year. There is no doubt that those kids will be behind.**

I understand you were put in a difficult decision based on the state mandate for child care. **However, since we are way below those the numbers we anticipated, it's time to make some different decisions for the kids sake based on the actual numbers.**

**My oldest son has been involved with organized activities (outside of school) this fall. It has been done safely, strictly and wisely and we have been doing the same with Duluth activities recently. It is wise to keep the kids**

involved not only for their mental well-being but to keep them busy so they do not engage in risky behavior. Some of these kids are depressed because they aren't able to engage in anything right now. You can see the pure relief on most of the kids faces when they get to do an activity safely with friends.

The outbreaks that we've seen in the area haven't been from school or activities. They've come from idle time when a group gets together and is unsupervised.

I know there are risks. As a parent, I am willing to sign a waiver with the school district like I've been asked to do with other activities this fall.

There's a lot of disappointment and frankly anger out there right now. It's understandable, after all, we're talking about kids' lives and well-being. We've lost kids out of the district based on these decisions. I'm sure you see the numbers showing that is a fact. The remaining kids will face the consequences from the monetary reality of that next year.

**The future school board meetings and the decisions that come from them are an opportunity to steer us in a different direction based on our new reality of the numbers of the child care and also what we've learned about the lack of transmission etc with other districts that are in school. Please consider all of this in your future decisions.**

**Feel free to call me to discuss further reasonable person.**

**I am upset but I assure you, I'm a**

Thank you,

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**Dave Shea**





Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Please give the kids a chance**

1 message

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**Laura LaFontaine**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org, David Kirby <david.kirby@isd709.org>, Paul Sandholm <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, Jill Lofald <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, Alanna Oswald <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, sally.trnka@isd709.org

As a teacher, coach, and parent, I hope the Duluth Public Schools considers keeping extracurricular activities an option. Our children need the mental/emotional and physical health provided by extracurricular activities in this difficult time.

As a health teacher for the past 25 years, I have worked to protect the safety of our children. The mental and emotional health of our children is extremely fragile. They need to be part of safe activities that allow them to be with others.

As a coach for the cross country and track, we kept over 100 athletes safe during this past cross country season. The athletes needed that time to interact with their teammates. We get to celebrate our amazing section teams that qualified for state. A state meet will not happen. What they do have are memories of hard work, teamwork, and being resilient. Memories of adults who did the right thing so they could have a moment to shine. We had a complete season because kids followed the protocols set forth by the MSHSL and ISD 709.

As a parent, I watched last spring completely taken away and was incredibly sad for the class of 2020. My senior son and his teammates are anxious. The class of 2021 is watching, hoping, they get something normal about their senior year. They deserve to have a chance.

As a school board member, I understand your task is difficult and I certainly appreciate your time reading this heartfelt email. Please give the coaches and advisors a chance. Give the kids a chance to show you that they care about themselves through their participation in extracurricular activities.

Thank you.

Laura LaFontaine

—  
Laura LaFontaine

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Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Input for School Board Meeting

1 message

**Pat and Angela O Connell**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

Cc: Rosalie Loeffler-Kemp &lt;rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org&gt;, "david.kirby@isd709.org" &lt;david.kirby@isd709.org&gt;,"paul.sandholm@isd709.org" &lt;paul.sandholm@isd709.org&gt;,"jill.lofald@isd709.org" &lt;jill.lofald@isd709.org&gt;,"kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" &lt;kelly.durickeder@isd709.org&gt;,"alanna.oswald@isd709.org" &lt;alanna.oswald@isd709.org&gt;,"sally.trnka@isd709.org" &lt;sally.trnka@isd709.org&gt;

Hello:

We are Pat and Angela O'Connell, parents of a Duluth East freshman.

We want to thank the school board members for their time and dedication to the education of students in ISD #709. We recognize the difficult position everyone is in throughout the country, state and district in trying to address education during a pandemic. It is a no-win situation for all involved. That said, we also believe our district can, and needs to do better to provide the education that our student population deserves, especially at the middle and high school levels. Being a teacher in the School District of Superior (Pat), has given us first hand insight into the drastic differences in how remote learning has been handled between our two districts since March.

We believe the most telling statement about how distance learning is currently going, came from one of our son's teachers who indicated during a video that school conferences would be a waste of time because he doesn't know who anyone is. If distance learning is our long-term reality we need to strive for better. Students and teachers need to know each other. We are very concerned that an entire year of asynchronous teaching will have long term devastating effects on all students in our district and our kids will fall behind others in the state.

It is becoming evident, the students in ISD 709 (at least for the middle and high school levels) are not receiving an equitable education compared to other students around the area and state, where teachers do know their students because of synchronous and hybrid learning. Our students have been left to teach themselves in this current model. There is no synchronous learning, despite the technology now available to do so. Students are expected to work through modules of extensive lessons, instructions and videos with no set schedule. Our 15-year-old son who is on an IEP is having a difficult time trying to navigate all that is expected of him and he has been behind in his course work since week 1. Despite the best efforts of his IEP case manager, we have resorted to hiring a tutor for him in order to help him navigate distance learning and to help alleviate tensions in trying to help him as parents. We feel fortunate to be able to provide this to him but know there are many families who do not have such an option. Even though teachers do make themselves available online – it simply is not enough and our son has found it to be intimidating to join a google meet to ask specific questions. While we believe teachers are doing their best (we have wonderful, dedicated teachers!) we do not understand why they are not being expected to run "live" classrooms with at least one section of each

class being taught live each day or even 2-3 days per week, which then can be watched later for viewing by others later on? We feel strongly we must move to this model in order for distance learning to be successful.

With regard to sports and activities, the district's plan to shut down athletics is more restrictive than the guidelines set forth by the MSHSL and the Minnesota Department of Education. We just learned our district is potentially shutting down athletics when the COVID numbers are 35/10,000. The MN Guidelines Recommend that activities be halted when Covid Numbers are 50/10,000. Even at those recommendations, many districts are choosing to continue athletics and extracurricular activities simply because of the fact that very few teams are seeing Covid spread amongst team members, and they recognize that athletics and extracurricular activities are a positive outlet for teenagers. This is currently the only engagement our son has and it has been a very important component to keeping him mentally healthy, physically active and most important, connected to his friends. We hope the district will carefully consider where the numbers are being generated from before making a decision to take away their only social outlets during this restricted time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Pat & Angela O'Connell



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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**Let them play!**

2 messages

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**Todd Kuusisto**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020 :

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>

Let them play!

Sent from my iPhone

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**Public Comment** <public.comment@isd709.org>

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: Anthony Bonds, Nichele Canavan

[Quoted text hidden]



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Continuance/Cancelation of Sports

1 message

**Wendy BURKE**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

My name is Wendy Burke and I have a 12th grade student at Denfeld HS. In 2015 my son spent the majority of his summer recovering from a significant traumatic injury. As we traveled to one of his last medical appointments, I noticed he was wearing his hockey helmet in the car. His explanation was that he wasn't going to take any chances on not being cleared to resume play. He was craving a return to normal with his friends. Our kids are craving that now. I am asking that high school athletics and activities not be shut down due to rising COVID numbers in our community.

My son has not stepped foot in a classroom in several months. In addition to lost educational opportunities, he has missed his junior golf season and his senior hockey season is now in jeopardy. College recruitment opportunities have been significantly impacted for these kids.

My questions are these:

St Louis County is a large geographical area. Who are the actual populations affected in our area? What are the ages? Have college students caused our numbers to rise? People in LTC facilities? Are we certain that those being tested are St Louis County residents?

We need to see relevant data that puts case numbers into perspective. Obviously, school isn't a transmission site because our kids are not in school. Sports/extracurricular activities are not the source of the problem. The participants should not be at the mercy of the community.

Adolescent depression and anxiety are on the rise. Mental health is a huge concern. In fact, the board spent a great deal of time listening to the many supports the district has or is planning to put into place at the October 6 meeting. We know that exercise, friends, and a connection to someone can lessen the risk factors. Extracurricular activities are often the one thing that keeps a kid engaged in school. Coaches do more than coach - they coach choices, they coach consequences, and they coach respect on and off the field.

In a reply to an email my son sent to member Lofald, she stated that "School districts are free to make their own decisions from what our County Health directors share." I ask that you carefully consider the success that soccer, football, and swimming were able to have. I believe that if done correctly, with safeguards in place, our kids can participate and remain healthy.

Our kids are craving a return to normal. I realize that normal means something different right now but I believe that the benefits of allowing sports and activities outweigh the risks for this population.

Respectfully,  
Wendy Burke



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## Return to learning

1 message

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Venessa Osborne

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>

Please give kids the opportunity to get back to in-person learning this upcoming semester.

Thanks,  
-Venessa

Sent from my iPhone





Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**Re: District Online learning**

1 message

**Patricia Moe**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

My name is Patricia Moe, and I have two children who attend East High School in grades 9 & 11. I was not happy to learn that the middle and high school children were kept out of school at the beginning of this school year because of 100-150 elementary children using the middle schools for daycare purposes. The District should have made more efforts to have these children cared for outside of school properties so our schools could be used as they were intended. I'm sure that if a general call for assistance had been put out, various churches and other entities would have been happy to step up and still would, given the chance.

Please, please make every effort to figure this out and make a plan for our kids to be IN SCHOOL when the case numbers go down. A whole year of distance learning will be completely unacceptable. Teachers can't get to know the students and so many will fall into the cracks when it is completely up to them to ask for help. So many classes are not helpful online. Language classes without meeting every day to speak are almost useless. I could go on and on. I know the teachers are making every effort, but without synchronous learning, there's only so much that they can do.

There has also been no mention of the PSAT for our juniors. When will that take place? It was supposed to be in October but no one has mentioned it.

Please don't let our kids completely lose out this year. Our neighboring districts and private schools have managed to have in-person learning, so don't discount it completely for our children! Make a plan. Please.

Sincerely,

Patricia Moe



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Please Open Our High Schools

1 message

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**Tim LeGarde**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Greetings-

My name is Tim LeGarde. My daughter is a sophomore at Denfeld. Her school year has thus far been choked with struggle and frustration at not being physically present for in-person learning. Both her schoolwork and her mental health are suffering, with no motivation or hope in sight to elevate either one.

Her IEP has been almost useless.

I hear similar stories from many other district parents.

I understand the childcare mandate is a challenge. I do not understand the need to close two entire high schools as back-up to accommodate fewer than 300 kids who are in need of childcare. Has thought been given to using Denfeld's auditorium or either high school's gymnasium as back-up locations? Both could accommodate a few hundred kids.

It's only October and this school year is already almost a lost cause for many of us. I have genuine concern about my daughter's ability to pass tenth grade, yet I believe the structure, motivation, and care provided by live, in-person teachers can and will salvage it.

Please put more thought and more creative consideration into this matter. Please open the high schools.

Thank you.

-Tim LeGarde



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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**(no subject)**

1 message

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**Leah Saburn**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

My name is Leah Saburn

I am a sophomore at Duluth East High School

I would love to go back to school, if not full time then at a hybrid situation

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Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Covid Situation

1 message

**Christi Sorvik**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

I just want to start out by saying- I know tough decisions are having to be made daily which cannot possibly please everyone. I know this is a trying time for everyone involved however I am very disheartened by the way that ISD 709 has handled the covid situation and their decision to provide distance learning to all secondary students. They had all summer to figure this out and dropped the ball, again.

My kids are in elementary and if it weren't for our specific school and my kids amazing principal and teachers I would pull my kids out of the district tomorrow. I do not feel ISD 709 handled the crisis with transparency and confidence. It is okay to say we don't know or are unsure, but it needs to be transparent. I do not think teachers should put their lives on the line and risk their health and safety, however on average 140 students needing childcare does not warrant the need to close 4 schools in our district. Our children are not receiving a proper education and this will be detrimental for years to come. To add insult to injury these students, who in several cases have had no face to face contact with their teachers, are being held accountable and graded to the same standards as if they were in a classroom setting being taught by licensed teachers.

I am sure these options have been explored but if they haven't- what is the cost to repair Central? Can we update that facility to use a tier 1 childcare center during the day? It could also serve as an ALC location for the students that will be displaced by the selling of HOCS?

If the schools need to be closed (because the numbers warrant it and not because we cannot figure out the childcare needs) why aren't the teachers providing lesson plans to parents that are now forced to also become classroom teachers? The secondary teachers should also be holding virtual classroom times during their regular scheduled classroom times, students can participate at that time or watch it at a later time? Why are they being held to the same grading standards, why not just place the content online and encourage it but not be required or graded?

There is no reason students across the bridge and the Greater Duluth are in school 4/5 days a week and we cannot do the same. If our leadership board needs help in problem solving and solutions they can reach out to parents, reach out to teachers- allow us on the advisory board. We can help. We want to help. We all want to do what is best for the students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christi Sorvik  
Mother of 4



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**Fwd: Email to send**

3 messages

Evie  
To: public.comment@isd709.org

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Halvorson, Marla"  
**Date:** October 19, 2020 at 12:17:52 PM CDT  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Email to send

Can you send this to [public.comment@isd709.org](mailto:public.comment@isd709.org) by 3:00?

Dear School Board:

There was a recent Minnesota Public Radio story on the dropping enrollment numbers in Minnesota's K-12 schools. Dissatisfaction with the learning options Districts are offering was one of the primary reasons parents have opted for alternatives like homeschooling, private schools, or open enrolling elsewhere. The Superintendent and District should clearly report how many students have left ISD 709 since last Spring.

We have watched Hermantown, Proctor, Superior, and more open their doors to students and develop robust online learning which includes synchronous and asynchronous learning. Demand for their academic offerings and approach is so high they have had to close enrollment.

The Superintendent and District should also be monitoring and reporting on the number of students who have not engaged at all as well as the weekly attendance rates. At a recent Committee of the Whole meeting, it was reported by the Digital Learning Coordinator there is real time data available "at our fingertips". Why hasn't the District shared some of those metrics and why hasn't the Board requested it?

Using an evidence and data based approach rather than general comments such as "the feedback we get suggests..." seems like something professional educators should be demanding.

Duluth is an outlier and not in a good way.

I would think the Board would also want an estimate on the impact caused by students and families who have left the District. They are taking state and federal funding with them as well. How much of a budget shortfall is the District forecasting as a result?

Under the current approach, the achievement gap is widening and deepening. Many, high achieving, traditional "A" students are performing at the bottom of the grading scale. We can't let these kids down. Change is needed. Ignoring the data - hiding the ball - and hoping to wait this all out isn't a solution and it is not in the best interest of our students.

Evelyn Christiansen

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Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

[Quoted text hidden]

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Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isa709.org

Sent from my iPad

[Quoted text hidden]



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Distance Learning - Middle School

1 message

**Stephanie Wollack**

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

Hi my name is Stephanie Wollack and I have a son in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and a daughter in 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Ordean East Middle School. Distance learning has been extremely challenging, frustrating and stressful this fall for my kids and my family. It has been particularly challenging for my 6<sup>th</sup> grader who was only used to elementary school before this, where everything was organized and coordinated for him. Now he's trying to acclimate into a middle school environment and often struggles to understand the context or purpose of what he's learning. One of our pain points is the number of places these kids have to check for information all day long. They need to check their email, their canvas inbox, grades, comments on any number of assignments (and these comments may be teachers asking them to do something additional), along with the dashboard. It's impossible for my kids to keep up with all of this. Recently, we noticed that several assignments were graded incorrectly and luckily my son realized he thought he should have got a better score than he did. When reviewing the graded assignment, we determined the teacher's grading key was incorrect on multiple questions on several different assignments. It's taken so much of my time and my son's time to track down the next google meet, schedule it into our day and work these issues to resolution and get his grades fixed. Sometimes it takes 2 conversations to resolve. It makes me wonder how many other of their assignments were graded incorrectly.

It's extremely disappointing that incoming middle schoolers haven't had the opportunity to see the school and meet teachers in small groups. It's not easy for an 11 year old to get on a google meet or phone call with their teachers who are complete strangers to them. In fact, it can be very stressful for them to have to call their teachers on their own. My husband and I both work all day and are unable to assist with their schooling questions or technical issues during the day. My kids, again age 11 and 13, are now required to sit at a computer all day long, by themselves and navigate this new environment. When I stop to think about what is happening, it makes me so sad for them. I can't imagine them doing this all year. This can't be good for their mental, social or academic well-being. They are unable to learn nearly as much without teachers there to teach them the curriculum (on-line or in person). There has to be a better way than what we have now, with safety precautions in place. My husband and I spend so much time in the evening or on weekends to walk through canvas in an attempt to teach our kids the lessons. Its not realistic they do this themselves in the current canvas setup.

I also have some questions I'm hoping can be answered in the near future:

- Will my kids' school be conducting a survey to find out whats working well and what's not working well? How can the district understand how things are going without that? Its frustrating when I hear people say things are going well without being asked for feedback myself as a parent.

- What is ISD 709's plan to get kids back into school as soon as possible at least 1 or 2 days a week? There has to be creative solutions available for this problem. Who is part of this creative planning? Has there been outreach to the community to brainstorm in some of these areas?

-How can such a small number needing child care prevent a hybrid model for our kids?

Thank you for your consideration and looking forward to responses to these items,

Stephanie Wollack



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Extracurricular Activities**

2 messages

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**Willem Hoeksema**  
To: public.comment@isd709.org

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

Dear School Board.

Please don't cancel our extracurricular activities. We are all being safe and wearing masks, so please just let us have them. Music and sports are so important to all of us, it's really all we have. We don't really have school anymore, we don't have clubs, we don't have dances or any other school social gatherings and it is awful. Music and sports are all we have to do. We always have loads of homework, so sports and music is always something we look forward to doing. It gives us a break in our day to have fun and be with friends and teachers/coaches.

Right now I'm in choralaires and football. With choraliers we get together twice a week to practice, and last week we got to sing the National Anthem at the football game. My football team practiced every morning at 7:00 am for three weeks, and now we are practicing in the afternoon. Everybody shows up as much as they can and we all look forward to it. If you cancel these activities we have no chance to do what we love.

Sincerely,  
Will Hoeksema

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**Public Comment** <public.comment@isd709.org>  
To: Anthony Bonds

Nichele Canavan

Mon, Oct 19, 2020 at 3:00 PM

[Quoted text hidden]





Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Concerns about ISD 709

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**Kelly Goetzman**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Superintendent Magas and School Board Members,

My name is Kelly Goetzman. I am the parent of a sophomore and senior at East High School. I'm writing to you today with concerns on how, as a district, your decisions have impacted them with respect to their education and emotional wellbeing.

With very limited synchronous learning opportunities, my kids are denied a connection with their teachers and classmates, and the structure and routine that benefits their education. What are the hurdles to providing this service? Have you asked the community to partner in providing technology to students?

What is your plan on how to proceed once COVID numbers are at a level to allow for in person learning? Are you taking the approach of surrounding school districts who are looking not only at county numbers, but individual factors of high school age numbers? As parent partners with the District, we should be afforded transparency on how the District has arrived at its decisions.

Lastly, I urge you to reconsider a potential shutdown of extracurricular activities. The effect this will have on our stressed out kids is detrimental. Extracurriculars provide a sense of normalcy that they have been denied in so many other ways. Shutting down these activities is also in direct conflict with Superintendent Magas's message from October 15 encouraging students to 'take time for pursuits and people that bring you joy'.

My hope is that you will take this to heart, and make decisions based on your mission statement of community vision and priorities. That you will 'work to inspire every student to achieve their potential, and prepare students to lead productive, fulfilling lives as citizens of Duluth and the wider world'.

Sincerely,  
Kelly Goetzman



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Upcoming Topic of Extracurricular Activities/Sports

1 message

**Mandy Juenemani,**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org, david.kirby@isd709.org, paul.sandholm@isd709.org, jill.lofald@isd709.org, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, alanna.oswald@isd709.org, sally.trnka@isd709.org

To whom it may concern,

I am sending this email on behalf of my family to address a topic very close to us during the COVID-19 pandemic and the upcoming discussion by the school board regarding continuing extracurricular activities and sports.

I do want to acknowledge that this is a very difficult discussion regarding the health of both our students and community, and that there are strong feelings both for and against. As someone who works in the health care industry and has been personally impacted in many ways, along with having seen the efforts and outcomes, I feel compelled to share our feelings and experience. Please know that this is not something that our family takes lightly. We have a high risk family member and have been keeping up to date and educated in what is occurring not only in our community or state, but also across the nation and world.

That being said, in regards to the specific topic at hand of extracurricular activities and sports, we urge the school board to consider all options in order to allow the continuation for several reasons.

One of the most common is the concern for our kids health, both mentally and physically. Removing the extracurricular activities and sports is going to be very detrimental and for our family is the only contact that our kids have had outside of our home. We have all sacrificed time with family and other friends since the shut downs to ensure that we are following all protocols in hopes that they will be able to continue to participate in extracurricular activities and sports. Their friendships have already struggled due to limited contact and the kids who are participating in their same activities are those they are the closest too. I fear by removing these activities from their lives, there is going to be such a gap in both their social and physical growth, some I've already seen. Both of my kids are becoming more social introverts and are losing interest in those people whom they used to be close too. Where they once were very articulate in speaking to adults, this area has also decreased. Because of these items, in order to limit the impact without these school activities we would be put in a position to need to allow them to spend time with their friends in what would more than likely be uncontrolled environments.

Although there is an increase in cases in our county and the surrounding area, it does appear that very few cases that have been spreaders are due to school related extracurricular activities and sports. Even with our school district having the kids in full distance learning, it is hard to understand how the students could be considered for any primary source of spread. Those in the field that I have spoken too have stated much of the spread in our area is due to bars and parties, and I'd hope none of our students are frequenting those establishments. Every day I see at least 1-2 social media posts about bars being closed due to positive COVID-19 tests with their staff and patrons. Jokes aside, it doesn't feel right to tell all our kids who have been following the rules so diligently that they are losing their activities due to those who choose to do nothing in the community.

From experience with our kids participating in activities this summer, the school coaches have taken extreme measures to ensure they are following rules and guidelines to limit any spread. That has proven to be successful! The staff had worked hard and held their student athletes accountable. It does fall to families to adhere but I feel that the majority of extracurricular activities and sports families in our community have been making sacrifices to allow their kids to participate and are willing to continue this.

To elaborate on our experience during the pandemic that has shown kids can participate safely without COVID-19 spreading, both of my kids have been participating in extracurricular activities and sports since June. My son has been on 5 separate teams and my daughter on 4. Almost every weekend has been travelling to the Twin Cities and Madison, WI area for tournaments. We started this with a very hesitant approach of being almost terrified to participate back in June, but was willing to see how it was all handled because our kids were struggling with school being remote and spring activities cancelled. To my surprise, the events have been handled very well. Athletes and spectators have adhered to the rules of sanitation, masks and limited spectators (events would vary between 11-25 spectators per team). We have only heard of one event that had a team who was infected, and they happened to come from out of state.

I am also the DC/president of our local United States Pony Club. We were held to very high standards in regards to having in person mounted meetings and education from the National level that at one point exceeded the states rules. I have seen firsthand the struggle of many of our members since the club is many times their only activity and socialization outside of school, and we were not able to meet in person for several months. We continue to work with limited resources for them but are able to continue with their education and training due to sanitation, mask and distance requirements. It has taken more work and effort, but the kids have been so appreciative.

I feel that our experience has shown that there is an impact to not having these activities and that there are solutions, we just need to be willing to put forth the effort and not fail these kids who rely so heavily on these activities. Many of our kids have sacrificed so much to help ensure these activities can continue, please consider all possible options. I know the community would be very happy as well.

Thank you for your time to review our feedback, thoughts and experiences.

Take care,

Mandy Juenemann



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Digital Learning Concerns

1 message

kgoetzman2662@charter.net

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

Cc: "kgoetzman2662@charter.net" &lt;kgoetzman2662@charter.net&gt;

To Members of the Board of ISD 709:

Good afternoon! I am writing once again to express my concern for the current digital/distance learning platform ISD 709 is currently using with middle or high-school students. I have two high school students currently attending East High School and am a member of KidsFirst!709. Though they are talented students, I see constant struggle for the context of homework assignments—there are delays in hearing from teachers about any questions they might have, there are essentially NO synchronous learning opportunities even in CITS classes, and that they have not even had teachers share a class list with them so that they could reach out to other students to discuss content should they want to. In short, while I realize we are in the midst of a very unique situation, I think ISD 709 could do better.

As our district's governing Board, I believe that citizens have elected you each to your position based on some concept that you have a combination of knowledge, experience, and stamina to continually meet with the public (parents, students, business, government leaders) to address the good and the bad, to make continual improvements in Duluth students' educational opportunities. This is certainly a time that requires engagement with the community like no other, and yet, it feels like as a Board, that has been a secondary initiative. Rather than to double down and to invite community participation in creating the framework for how this District will continue to offer its coursework and fulfill its mission to Duluth students, there seems to be a lack of transparency, trust, and public involvement. Regardless of what other local schools were planning and what the State's guidelines initially said for in-person learning, District 709 chose to base school closure and programming decisions on the results of a poorly-written survey about childcare and rising numbers of positive Covid cases (that had not yet risen). Other Districts have found alternative solutions. The MN Department of Education shared that they were not aware of even one other school district which has kept secondary students from in-person learning to provide childcare for elementary students. ISD 709 is depriving students of the hybrid experience they should have had since the start of the school year which would have allowed the opportunity to meet teachers and classmates and provide the structure and foundation middle and high school students so desperately need. The fact that the District did not require commitments from families as to their childcare needs before school started and then opened enrollment to 1 Tier-1 parent households makes it hard to believe it is committed to the educational needs for older students in the District.

I am sure that members of the Board are closely following the bi-weekly COVID-19 infection numbers. One Board member recently shared that the child care issue alone was not the reason that the hybrid option for middle school and high school students was scrapped. Additional comments from that Board member reflected that numbers of Covid cases have continued to rise since the childcare decision was made, and now we are headed to distance learning as a model for all ages of students with "numbers exploding". I do not want children in school when it is not safe for them to be there and support distance learning for those families that are uncomfortable returning to the classroom even when the case rate numbers support hybrid and in-person learning. The reality is the vast majority of school districts around the region, state, and country have figured this out and ISD 709 does not appear to even have a framework for allowing children back into schools as soon as safely possible. To me, the key is in developing a framework for both now and the eventual return to school—numbers WILL drop here at some point.

From what I hear other parents saying, I would not agree with the synopsis offered at the October 6 Committee of the Whole meeting where the Board seemed to summarize the current platform as successful where students have "leaned in" and parents overall being thankful and "really pleased" with digital learning. I think that some teachers and students are definitely doing a great job. However, there still seems to be an overall lack of consistency and engagement. Why can't the Board request/require/figure out a way to use synchronous learning to at least SOME degree each day so that

these students can get back a sense of regular routine and normalcy? This is critical for their formation. Instead of "no" to every request for socially-distanced and safe events or now athletics, why can't the response be "let's try to figure it out" so that students are not robbed of another entire year of their social and educational development. I am very concerned for students' long-term development and also the losses our kids are seeing in their school year vs other districts when it comes to college applications as well.

In summary, I cannot understand what seems to be the lack of engagement by the Board to help create the best system we can to educate our students. I think the Board is underestimating the assistance it could receive from parents, students, and others in the community to help bridge a perceived technology gap and other impediments to offering classes in this manner. I think you can be stronger leaders and help us restore faith in the District. Show me.

Thanks for reading.

Jeff Goetzman

Duluth



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**LET US PLAY DULUTH!!**

1 message

**Kelly Spenningsby**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

Good afternoon –

I am reaching out to you to re-consider shutting down HS athletics and extra-curricular activities for this winter.

1. Please look at the numbers – HS age kids are not the category that is driving up numbers in our city/county – the college age/students age 20-24 are at the highest number, followed by the elderly as there has been mandatory mass testing at all SNF's weekly. Look more closely at the population numbers of the population affected (HS aged kids and mid-age parents).
2. Hockey is a sport that has been played safely beginning in July and w/ minimal to no interruptions throughout the state of MN – please look to MN Hockey and MDH for guidance on this. My kids have both been playing hockey in different arenas across the state weekly since beginning/mid July. We have only encountered 1 episode of a positive case where the team had to quarantine for 10 days even after the entire team tested negative aside from 1 kid (initial reason for testing) even w/ staying at hotels multiple weekends w/ social distancing measures in place, masks in public places, etc.
3. Sports can proceed if facilitated safely – many gymnasiums, sports arenas can accommodate for < 25% capacity. I actually have felt safer going to the hockey rink as I see them disinfecting than I am filling my car w/ gas weekly or going to the grocery store/Target bi-weekly, etc. Consider decreasing from 2 spectators to 1 or none and live streaming activities.
4. HS kids need an outlet – they no longer have the option of going to school – instead of encouraging socialization, we are pushing them more and more towards electronics w/ distance learning. In many conversations w/ my friends, we are seeing our HS aged children go through many different emotions. They need this support of some normalcy more than ever before to support their mental health.
5. As Superintendent Magas put it, self-care is especially important for our health – exercising and being active, taking time for pursuits that bring you joy is essential! Sports and extracurricular activities are voluntary – so why don't we let the parents/children involved decide whether or not they want to participate in said activity. If families/children are at higher risk, maybe those few select individuals would opt out of activity for this year.
6. LET US PLAY



Kelly Spenningsby, OTR/L

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Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## Distance Learning

1 message

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**Cursta Dimberio**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

I am currently a senior at Duluth East High School. My name is Cursta Dimberio and am the captain of the tennis and golf team. These leadership positions give me the opportunity to talk to others about how they feel. Many others along with myself find distance learning not working. It is very hard to be motivated and get work done. This is not fair to do to anyone, especially us seniors who worked so hard for this year. We are getting everything taken away from us. We're being affected and no one seems to care. School used to be a priority, what happened? Since we are not in school we are losing the ability to become good successful adults. Please take this into consideration of what you're doing to us.

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Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**Secondary distance learning and cancelation of extra curricular sports/clubs**

1 message

**Brown, Angela C.**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

This message was sent securely using Zix®

Hello, my name is Angie Brown and my daughter Chloe is a junior at Denfeld this year. Chloe started out the school year with a full schedule that included two CITS classes and one AP class along with exec board and Spanish. She struggled at the end of the year last year but had high hopes that this year would be better, however, this has not proven true for her to this point. She has dropped Spanish 3 and CITS pre-calc as she was already struggling and did not want these classes to have a negative impact on her overall GPA and class placement. She did replace the classes with electives but is very frustrated that she was in this situation to begin with. She feels that if she would have had some in person contact with her teachers she may not have had the amount of struggles and may not have had to make the difficult decision to drop the classes. My nephew is also a junior at Superior High School and she has frequent conversations with him about how the school year is going for them and is very angry with the fact that she is not being provided with the same level of education as he is. Initially I tried to point out positive aspects of distance learning and what she could focus on, but I am now to the point that I feel she has a right to be angry, and I am as well. I am angry that the district has put the needs of 150-200 primary students before the needs of my child along with 4100 other secondary students. I feel that she is essentially teaching her self and that the district has very little concern about what impact this will have on her in the future both academically as well as emotionally. She has struggled to keep connected with her peers and was really looking forward to the dance season, so when she learned that this is also in jeopardy, she said "So now they are taking this away too? Isn't it bad enough that they took away school to open a daycare and now they are taking what little we had left to look forward to."

My oldest daughter graduated this last year and lost out on many final memories of high school and now I am watching my youngest struggle with her many losses. Please do not take away what little bit of normalcy they have left of this school year.

Respectfully,

**Angela Brown, RN, BSN***Endoscopy*

This message was secured by Zix®#174.





Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Please keep co-curricular activities at ISD 709**

1 message

**Emily Vos**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, rosalia.loefflerkemp@isd709.org, david.kirby@isd709.org, paul.sandholm@isd709.org, jill.lofald@isd709.org, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, alanna.oswalkd@isd709.org, sall.trnka@isd709.org

**Board Members-**

I am in support of keeping sports and co-curricular activities open at Duluth Public Schools. As a parent of two boys working to engage in distance learning, I see the importance of at least keeping sports and activities open for students. The social & emotional needs of students can be met during practices, games and even group chats. Affiliation and belonging are critical in every human existence; with the school model as distance learning, sports is the mode to meet these basic human needs. No one wants this pandemic, but we must deal with the situation before us. We want to support our kids to keep moving forward in life, let's keep them connected to peers and academics by building community safely through activities. Their stories will already involve the grief of losing out of special moments and memories, please do not shut down until it is absolutely necessary. Now is not that time.

Sincerely,  
Emily Vos

Parent of two current Duluth EAST students in activities and one former Greyhound involved with many school sports and activities



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Let the Kids Play - A MUST**

1 message

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**JODI DARRIN NELSON**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020, 1:00 PM

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

The purpose of this email is to reiterate the importance of allowing our children to participate in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities are optional. If a family feels as though these activities are not right for their family at this time, then they may choose to not participate. Because these activities are optional everyone gets to make their own choice. We need to ensure we are continuing to provide a safe environment for kids to connect with their friends and participate in athletics, drama, speech, etc. If we choose to not provide these safe extracurricular options, kids will come up with other options/activities to participate in that may not be looked upon favorably. Keeping children engaged is so crucial for their mental well-being. Life is all about choices and these students and their families need the option to participate!

Again, extracurricular activities are optional. All students should have a choice as to whether or not they feel comfortable participating. The school district should not be making these decisions for each family.

Regards,

Jodi Nelson



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Distance learning**

1 message

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**Jim Toolman**  
To: public.comment@isd709.org

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

Dear Superintendent, unfortunately the distance learning policy is failing our kids. They need to be in school learning from the teacher and be able to have someone available to ask questions. Most middle schoolers aren't effected by the virus and the unfortunate ones dying are elderly people. My son is new to the district and has also struggled to meet new friends. He has been depressed and has even been seeing a therapist. I can't believe it is ok to have the school open for daycare but not for in school learning. Of course you are making more money charging daycare and still getting taxpayers dollars even though the kids aren't in school. Looks like you are putting the budget first before the child's education needs.

Jim Taylor



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**(no subject)**

1 message

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**William Weinkauf**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

Hello my name William Weinkauf, I'm a senior at Duluth East and a member of the hockey team and this is not the way I wanted my senior year to go. While I realize we are in a pandemic how the district is providing online learning is not working for me and many others. With the recent conversations of stopping all sports I am worried many in my senior class that they will just give up. It is time that you look at the whole picture of what keeps kids healthy. Please re-evaluate your decisions and help us have a senior year and sports season.  
Thank you.

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Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Return to Learn

1 message

Michael Latterell \*

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, superintendents@isd709.org, schoolboard@isd709.org

My name is Michael Latterell and I have two daughters in 1st and 3rd grade at Congdon Park Elementary. While my daughters have continued to grow and thrive in their development, the school year has been generally unproductive and needlessly stressful. It's difficult to overstate how much the children ultimately bear the stress caused by the poor planning that has created this year's experience.

Their work isn't communicated clearly and there's not enough time for them to complete it. They have little interaction with their teachers and are aware that something is not right.

Both of my daughter's are in group "B" at Congdon. My understanding is that they are receiving less school days because of their assignment and the district has failed to address this deficiency. How did the district allow this to happen and what is their plan to address this issue?

The current distance learning plan is simply not sustainable and any attempt by the district to sustain it will force my daughters into another school system that considers their education less disposable. They're not learning and they're not happy. Not at school and increasingly not at home.

I have no idea what the interests/goals of the Return to Learn advisory committee are or which persons/backgrounds compose the committee. My understanding is that contrary to the district's own policy this committee is kept secret. I've heard rumours that the committee doesn't actually exist. Judging exclusively on the practical results of the school year, there are clearly substantive deficiencies present in the committee and I urge the board to address them.

Understandably, I don't feel the interests of my daughters, myself, or other parents are effectively represented by the Return to Learn Committee. The failure of the Superintendent or the board to respond to public comments creates the understanding that the board considers its own interests to conflict with families'.

I hope the committee will become public, include experts in children's mental health, publicly recognize existing deficiencies, and put the education of our local children first above other concerns.

Sincerely,

Michael Latterell



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Distance learning**

1 message

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**Lori Mich**,  
To: public.comment@isd709.org

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To all whom it may concern,

My 17 year old son is a junior at DHS. We received the option for paper learning packets for him last Spring, as he struggles with the online schooling.

I have emailed his case worker at Denfeld twice now, and my requests for paper learning packets have been denied. My son is struggling with the online programs (on his computer and on a school issued computer) and he is extremely upset and frustrated. Every single day.

My next step will be to request an amendment to his long standing IEP.

Someone, please help us! This worked so much better last Spring for the way he learns....

Signed,

Concerned Mom

Lori Bushey

Sent from my iPhone



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Distance learning is not working

1 message

**Stacey Dimberio**

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

October 19, 2020

Superintendent and School Board;

At the last school board meeting many heartfelt letters of how distance learning is failing our students were read. My question is were they heard?

I have watched the board meetings, committee of the whole meetings and finance meetings. While I appreciate the presentations from mental health, finance, technology and curriculum I do not appreciate the fact that there has been NO acknowledgement of what is not working and what ISD 709 is doing to fix what is not working.

I do not appreciate the district not being honest and open with numbers of students utilizing child care. Not being honest and open with the number of students who have left the district, not being honest and open regarding if there is even a plan to get kids back into school when numbers allow,

It is disheartening to read articles of other Superintendents, and districts looking at all factors and all ways to get students safely into school.

It is disheartening to look at other district's robust online learning plans.

It is disheartening to look at other districts fighting for ways to keep extra curriculums going. All while our district finds ways( childcare) to keep kids out of school and numbers (30 cases versus the "recommended" 50) to shut extracurriculars down.

At this point I want honesty,

I want to be able to trust what is working right and honesty that what is not working is being looked at and carefully evaluated. I don't expect perfection, I expect honesty and a plan to improve. I want to know all voices ARE being HEARD.

I have lost faith, heart and trust that this school board really cares about what the students of 709 need.

It is not easy to make decisions during a pandemic. Most students care, most teachers care, and most parents care. We need to know that the school board cares. Cares about the best interest of EVERYONE and not just the people who are settling for an ok education or thinking Covid is temporary.

Be honest, own up, listen to heart and learn, look at all sides and facts, make tough decisions and give our kids the education they deserve.

Trying to remain hopeful-

Stacey Dimberio



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Online learning

1 message

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**Heather McGrew**

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

School Board,

Hello. My name is Heather McGrew, and I have an eighth grader, Adam McGrew, at Lincoln. I am concerned about the current state of his education. Although we have been told that our students should have about 18 hours of work per week, on average my son has had about ten. This means he spends most of his day on his Xbox playing games because my husband and I are at work; then, when I get home, he gets on and for a couple of hours in the evening and gets some homework done.

I am profoundly disappointed in this situation, especially since he has not been adequately challenged or engaged since last March. We were told that this year's online learning (version 2.0) would be significantly improved, but I'm just not seeing a big difference. I understand that many teachers are working hard and had to learn how to teach via Canvas rather quickly, but the level and depth of work he's being asked to do just isn't meeting his needs. Also, I'm concerned that the only opportunity for engagement with peers and teachers has been optional office hours/Google Meets. My son always says he doesn't have any questions so he doesn't attend, and I'm not home to require it of him. Quite honestly, if he has to choose between playing a video game and attending an optional Zoom session, he'll almost always choose the former. My understanding is that all students have access to Chromebooks and hotspots; why are we not doing Zoom lectures/class meetings?

I know this is a difficult time for all—and especially to be a leader. But I truly believe we can do better by our kids. I urge you to consider a more interactive, robust online learning model until the regional COVID-19 numbers allow for hybrid learning.

Thank you for your time and consideration.





Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## Extra curricular activities

1 message

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**Rebecca Hudoba**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

School board,

Please do not vote to discontinue extracurricular activities for our kids. And it's not "extra" it is essential. Please, for the sake of our children's mental and physical health, do not prematurely cut the kids' activities.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Hudoba

Parent of Dean, junior at East and football player and Tim, freshman at East and football player



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**LET US PLAY!**

1 message

**Connery Wiecks**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org, david.kirby@isd709.org, paul.sandholm@isd709.org, jill.lofald@isd709.org, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, alanna.oswald@isd709.org, sally.trnka@isd709.org

Dear members of the school board,

Hello, my name is Connery Wiecks and I am a junior at Duluth High School School and I play football. I am writing to you to beg you to not shut down my sport and others. There are ZERO other schools that have taken measure this extreme at this point and I am begging you not to become the first. There are schools in other counties such as Itasca County (Grand Rapids) and in Hennepin County (Minneapolis) that all have higher COVID-19 rates then St. Louis County but have remained open. Please don't make yourself look foolish. Sports are just as important as school. I have learned way more in sports than in school. I have learned how to be a team player, how to work hard, how to be consistent, how to be loyal and most importantly how to get up every time I get knocked down. I have made life friends and have gotte=on memories that will last with me forever. Please don't take this opportunity away from me for a virus less deadly than the flu to children. You have already stolen part of my sophomore year and junior year from me PLEASE don't take football away from me. If you truly care about us you will allow us to play and make friendships and memories that will last a lifetime. Please read this article <https://www.statesman.com/news/20200909/fact-check-is-flu-harder-on-kids-than-covid-19> and follow the science. THE FLU IS MORE DEADLY TO KIDS THEN COVID-19!!! LET US PLAY!

thank you-Connery Wiecks

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Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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**Distance learning is not working!**

1 message

**Kelly Spenningsby**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Good evening -

Please re-consider your distance learning 2.0!

1. My son and his group of peers are not benefitting from distance learning. My son expresses his dissatisfaction w/ this school year on a daily basis.
2. Why are teachers not offering/providing live Zoom class lectures and/or pre-recorded lessons/lectures? This is being done in other school districts where teachers are teaching virtually as they would be in-person.
3. Poor wifi and no technology for low-income families is not a good enough reason as to why other children can't be offered better instruction.
4. Has it been considered to identify the low income families that need more support and have those in person learning w/ virtual live/recorded options available for those that are able to accommodate that?
5. What is being done to further enhance our distance learning?
6. Marshall has been in school for 8+ weeks and Stella Maris for 6+ weeks, Proctor and Hermantown have been doing hybrid learning - has ISD 709 coordinated w/ area schools to see what is working well for them to continue w/ in-person learning?
7. My son and his peers have expressed concerns about how this academic year will affect their future and college choices as well as potential college scholarships. For being in mostly honors classes, he is very concerned that he's just "doing the work" and "not learning much."

Thank you for your consideration and attention to these matters.

Kelly Spenningsby



Public Comment <public.comment@isd709.org>

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## State of our students and education system

1 message

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Amy Kranig <sup>1</sup>

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>

Dear ISD 709

Please have education and the state of the ISD 709 students educational, social and emotional needs become an actual priority during this pandemic crisis. We need leadership and we need a course of action that sets education and commitment to our students as an actual priority to them and actually have our school system to be something their city is proud of. School needs to commit to students, give them something to rely on and be excited about and to actually show value in and that it's worth the investment toward their future.

--  
Amy Kranig



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

## Cancellation of fall sports

1 message

craig ankrum

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

My son plays a fall sport at East High School. I want to have the fall sports continue. There is not enough positive cases of Covid-19 amongst the high school sports population to support a cancellation of sports at this time.

If there are positive cases in elementary or middle school populations, that should not reflect or carry over to high students as they are separated and further are already doing distance learning. Distance learning is already impacting many students negatively as it relates to their mental health, and overall education.

I feel that the distance learning is the wrong model for the high school level and at least a form of highbred model should be considered.

Leave the decision for high school students to be involved in the fall and winter extra curricular sports and activities up to the parents and family units.

No other school district in the state has gone to this next level of isolation and now is not the right time for the Duluth school district to enforce the cancellation of fall sports and activities.

Thank you for taking the time to read tgis email and for your careful consideration on how to move forward in this matter.

Craig Ankrum

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Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

**I know this is late... EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

1 message

Nancy Janzig

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

Cc:

This message was sent securely using ZixCorp.

Hello All~

I know this is late and I understand why you may not be able to acknowledge receipt of it during your meeting tomorrow.

To keep it simple. I understand that you are in a tough position right now and that you truly want what is best for my son and for our schools. As you look at making this decision, please know that human interaction and comrade right now is very critical to our students. When I asked my son how things are going, he said that the thing he misses the most is the opportunity to "see new" faces and meet new people. Football and basketball are helping to fill this void. It's that simple. You will not get a full dissertation from me trying to convince you of any of this as I am sure you already know the multiple viewpoints.

My son and many others need at least one piece of "normalcy" in this chaotic world right now. They need human interaction and I know that when you decide to continue to allow extracurricular activities you will have full support of any additional safety and security practices you decide to put in place. If you need me as a parent volunteer to help enforce it then I will be there.

Best wishes,

Nancy

**Nancy Janzig, MA, MBA | Strategic Advisor**



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Student Mental Health

1 message

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**Jim Vos**

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

To: public.comment@isd709.org, rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org, david.kirby@isd709.org, paul.sandholm@isd709.org, jill.lofald@isd709.org, kelly.durickeder@isd709.org, alanna.oswald@isd709.org, sally.trnka@isd709.org

As a school counselor in a neighboring district and a parent of 2 East H.S. students I am continually challenged to do whatever I can to help promote the mental health of my own kids and the students in my district. During the past six months this has been the challenge of a lifetime. Feelings of anxiety, isolation and depression are very natural responses for any healthy, well adjusted person trying to endure the life changes brought on by the pandemic. Adolescents in particular aren't well equipped to deal with these social restrictions. By far the least distressed individuals I am meeting with during these times are the kids that are involved in structured athletics and activities. Even when highly restricted, these events seem to be the "best medicine" for our children's mental health.

My personal view is that when we choose to halt structured activities such as athletics and other extracurricular activities, students respond by finding less safe ways to gather in order to meet their needs. Going forward we may find that we don't have a choice, but until that time I hope Duluth Schools chooses to follow the greater state guidelines versus making decisions that only affect the kids in the Duluth district.

Thank you for all you are doing to help keep our children safe and healthy!

Jim Vos



Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Virtual Learning Duluth falls short

1 message

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**Amy Pozniak**

To: public.comment@isd709.org

Cc: Amy Pozniak

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

Good afternoon. I hope my comments are able to get in on time. I strongly feel some items could be handled better for the Duluth school system.

I would like to highlight the following five areas that I feel are the most important.

1) Hire some instructional designers and train the teachers how to be virtual educators.

I do not understand why trainings and planning didn't occur this summer to start our kids on time. They are already behind compared to the other districts.

Authentic feedback should also be given and suggestions on how to improve grades if necessary. Great job, nice, or a checked off rubric is not satisfactory feedback.

2) Virtual learning must be synchronous and required for all students.

All students should have the opportunity and be required to meet with their teacher once a week in a synchronous session where they are taught and told what to expect for the following week with regards to homework. The sessions could be recorded if students are sick or unable to attend with excused/documentated absences.

The academic week should be Monday through Friday. All student's have been trained to start their week on Monday and finish up their assignments by Friday. By having the due dates in the middle of the week at noon on Wednesday and no new work until Thursday, you are losing valuable time. If work was due at noon on Friday and new work was released at 4 p.m. on Friday, students and parents would have the weekend to review the following week and better prepare.

3) Hybrid learning should be allowed as the demands of childcare have NOT demanded all of the current resources allocated to them. Stopping all learning due to 140 kids in childcare is unnecessary and NOT necessary. Please re-evaluate and come up with some different solutions. The childcare kids could be located in other Duluth school buildings and supported through staff, this could allow all of our children a chance to be educated on site.

4) Do not increase the regulations to stop extracurricular activities. For many children this has been the opportunity to have an outlet and help eliminate mental health issues.

5) Protect your staff and don't pit different units against each other. If some units can be around children following the state-mandated guidelines, all units should be utilized to educate our children and get them back into the buildings.

Thank you,

Amy Pozniak

Ordean East and Denfeld parent





Public Comment &lt;public.comment@isd709.org&gt;

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## Decision to Keep Activities

1 message

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### Chris Sward

To: "public.comment@isd709.org" <public.comment@isd709.org>, "rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org" <rosalie.loefflerkemp@isd709.org>, "david.kirby@isd709.org" <david.kirby@isd709.org>, "paul.sandholm@isd709.org" <paul.sandholm@isd709.org>, "jill.lofald@isd709.org" <jill.lofald@isd709.org>, "kelly.durickeder@isd709.org" <kelly.durickeder@isd709.org>, "alanna.oswald@isd709.org" <alanna.oswald@isd709.org>, "sally.trnka@isd709.org" <sally.trnka@isd709.org>

I am writing today as a parent of a senior football player at Duluth East. I am hoping you choose to allow students to continue to participate in all school related activities. We think of this generation as one in the digital age and social networking online. But, I think all of us, who have been around teens these last few months, know they still need the interpersonal connection of being with friends and classmates. With schools closed for distance learning, sports and other extracurricular activities are some of the few places these teens can safely be with their friends. Last week Superintendent Magas sent a letter regarding mental health of students during distance learning and the isolation of these kids. Please make sure you consider that a top priority when making your decision this week.

Thank you,

Chris Sward - Accountant