



Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridges.org>

[External Email] Beecher Road Reopening Concerns

1 message

Susanna Dockendorff <sdockendorff@sbcglobal.net>

Mon, Aug 17, 2020 at 8:12 PM

To: "mdegennaro@woodbridges.org" <mdegennaro@woodbridges.org>

To Whom It May Concern

Like many families, we chose to raise our children in Woodbridge because of the wonderful reputation your school holds. Unfortunately, due to current events, we're feeling much more than normal jitters as we prepare our oldest to enter kindergarten. While we know these decisions would be required of us regardless of where we chose to live, we have concerns that a hybrid model, in any possible form, is not being considered.

I ask that you please examine the possibility of a hybrid model more thoroughly with the following in mind;

- From Maslow, we know that without basic needs met, children are unable to fully engage in learning. Setting aside the fact that maintaining all of these new regulations is exhausting, I ask you to consider how each child's feelings of safety while in school will be affected. Even the youngest learners have some idea of current events. They know that many people around them are getting very sick and adults are worried. Asking students to wear masks, teachers to wear masks and/or PPE, desk shields, social distancing and so many more crucial precautions may keep them healthy but will also be a constant reminder that they may not actually be safe while attending school. As life is now, we ask our students to practice lockdowns drills & have armed SROs in schools. How much more can we chip away at children's feelings of safety & security while in school before we've gone too far?
- I don't believe it's fair to expect anyone to wear a mask for extended periods while exposed to uncomfortably high temperatures. In recent years we've experienced September heat that on occasion has caused school districts to call for early dismissals. While discomfort may not fall directly into Maslow's hierarchy it will, without a doubt, impact how effectively students learn.
- From a developmental perspective, the expectations set forth are thoroughly inappropriate for even the oldest and most advanced learners. In order to be effective, teaching needs to be delivered in a multitude of modalities. I ask you to consider how every type of learner can be reached without any kinesthetic or interpersonal learning experiences.
- We all want our kids back to normal but we know full and well that whatever we do, at least for right now, will not be normal. Our children can't possibly be prepared for how difficult returning to school will be, nor do I think most parents realize how doing too much too soon can affect their child's emotional health. Sending children into a classroom that more closely resembles an institution, expecting them to manage social distancing & extreme hygiene practices & remain within their allotted 6 square foot island for most of the school day, all while trying to learn, could not be more abnormal and places an enormous amount of stress on these young learners.
- With the current plan, we are placing an enormous amount of responsibility on our teachers & students by mandating they practice the aforementioned precautions for 6+ hours a day, 5 days a week. I know all too well how tortuous and, at times impossible, distance learning was, but I don't think it's fair to ask our children and teachers to bear the weight of that burden in order to alleviate the strain on us as parents.

Please consider the implementation of a hybrid learning plan that includes children attending school for shortened days. While I realize that such a plan would not alleviate all of the concerns mentioned, I do think it is a step in the right direction to meet our children's educational, social & emotional needs. While this will not make students less likely to contract the illness or carry it home to their families, implementing a schedule of early dismissal days will allow our children to experience some of the normalcies we all want so desperately for them and allow them to make a more manageable transition into all of these new expectations & protocols. These are dramatic changes we expect our children to assimilate to in a matter of minutes on their very first day back at school. I beg of you to set them up for success by creating a plan that includes shortened school days and fewer days in their classroom.

Thank you for your time.



Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridgesps.org>

[External Email] Parent comment on School Reopening

Stefan Lyhne <shevell7@gmail.com>

Tue, Aug 18, 2020 at 5:12 PM

To: Beecher Road School <asheran@woodbridgesps.org>, csyriac@woodbridgesps.org, piascyk.boe@gmail.com, mdegennaro@woodbridgesps.org

To the Woodbridge Board of Education and Beecher Road School Administration,

My wife and I were upset when we read the letter submitted last week by the Beecher Road School teachers. We do not disagree that these are difficult times to find yourself working in close quarters with others and having to deal with the public. Indeed, both my wife and I are intimately aware as we both work as public librarians. We both have been working in-person daily for these last two months and my wife's library has already opened to the public and mine is preparing to do the same. No doubt we would love to stay home with our children and not have to deal with screaming patrons who refuse to wear facemasks, demand more time on the computers or who want to bring all six of their children in so that they can play. It goes without saying that while we consider ourselves just about as far from "essential workers" as it gets, the public and town officials have decided differently.

This is the new reality. While our story of public librarianship may seem trite, it echoes with the multitude of other essential workers in our community. We know doctors, dentists, nurses, police officers, pharmacists, electricians, retail workers, grocers and, yes, teachers that live here and have had to return to work. Those who are parents have had to scramble to find family, friends, nannies, babysitters, summer camps still open for enrollment and other alternatives to make things work. Many of us are exhausted, running out of solutions, and quite a few are running out of money to top it off.

The children are also not better off working remotely than in person at the elementary school level. Our impression of the switch in March to remote learning was it was scattered, lacked comprehensive goals, relied heavily on parent teaching, and did not prepare our children for the next year. Why are we supposed to believe that this will change in the coming school year? Instead of writing a letter detailing all the reasons why in-person schooling is unsafe, the teachers probably would have been better served explaining how well they would plan and prepare for the challenge of remote learning. It would have been a more compelling argument than "... 64% of our teachers believe that they cannot meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of students with the in-person model." We worry our children are already unprepared for this academic year because of last year's debacle, and extending that by another year seems not just foolish but downright negligent.

We all understand that in-person education is not perfectly safe. But at this point nothing is. However, studies do indicate that [children](#) are [statistically](#) less likely to [spread COVID](#) than teenagers or adults. In fact, the recent [advice of one pediatrician in the New York Times](#) pointed out that teachers likely have more risk from one another than they do from children in their classroom, in the form of teacher's lounges, staff meetings and general in-person interactions between faculty. In addition, if only 70 percent of parents expect to send their children back into school then this should be seen as a good sign. We are happy for those parents that can afford to keep their kids home. The teachers need to understand that there are many of us who cannot. If they want to have their electricity restored after the storm, go to their doctor's appointments, pick up their prescription medications, buy food at the grocery stores, or even check out a library book, they need to understand that this doesn't work without them doing their jobs, too.

Sincerely,

Stefan and Tamara Lyhne



Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

[External Email] Beecher Road School

4 messages

Marsha L. Ackerman <marsha.miller14@gmail.com>

Thu, Aug 20, 2020 at 3:57 PM

To: bheller@woodbridged.org, csyriac@woodbridgeps.org, mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org

Cc: Adam Ackerman <adam.ackerman@me.com>

Ms. Heller and Ms. Syriac,

My husband and I have been residents of Woodbridge for five years. We moved to Woodbridge specifically because of the excellent reputation of the schools for our two sons who are entering 3rd and 6th grade at Beecher Road School. My husband is an Internal Medicine Doctor and an Associate Director at Yale New Haven Hospital, giving him a great deal of first hand knowledge of the COVID-19 situation. He has been part of the front line dealing with this insidious virus.

We have both watched with awe the last few months of Board of Education meetings. We are incredibly disappointed at the response and at the choices that we are being offered. There is no perfect solution, and incredibly difficult decisions are necessary to make, but what has broken our hearts is to watch the polarization and the general lack of human compassion on display. Can we not treat our teachers with more consideration and respect and allow them a voice in the conversation, whether we agree with them or not? I am sure that we do not know all that has transpired, but based on these meetings, I would not want to teach in a school that was as dismissive of my concerns as some members of this administration have appeared to be.

There are such valuable arguments for students to return as well as to be more diligent in protecting their safety as well as that of the teachers. I write to you both because I want to be counted as a voice of reason in this conversation. **I urge you to encourage, in whatever way you are able, the Hybrid Plan of action, as laid out by the Board, for the upcoming school year.** Sadly, it is far too easy to diminish the severity of this virus' impact when it has not directly touched one's family. The residents of Woodbridge have been lulled into a state of complacency by the lack of widespread suffering in our community. There are simply too many students in a school the size of Beecher to enact reasonable protocols. Please encourage the Board not to make parents choose between the safety of their children and their emotional health. There can be compromise. **With the recent approval by the State of New Haven's remote learning plan, our school board has the freedom to choose something other than full in person learning.**

Marsha and Adam Ackerman

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Marsha L. Ackerman
marsha.miller14@gmail.com

Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

Fri, Aug 21, 2020 at 11:34 AM

To: Robert Gilbert <rgilbert@woodbridgeps.org>

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—
Marsha DeGennaro
Administrative Assistant
Superintendent's Office
Woodbridge School District
(203) 387-6631
(203) 397-0724 FAX

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Robert Gilbert <rgilbert@woodbridgeps.org>
To: **Marsha DeGennaro** <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

Fri, Aug 21, 2020 at 12:08 PM

Thanks

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Robert 'Bob' Gilbert
Superintendent of Schools
Woodbridge School District
Woodbridge, CT 06525
203-387-6631

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Christine Syriac <csyriac@woodbridgeps.org>
To: "Marsha L. Ackerman" <marsha.miller14@gmail.com>

Fri, Aug 21, 2020 at 4:05 PM

Cc: **bheller@woodbridgedct.org**, **Marsha DeGennaro** <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>, **Adam Ackerman** <adam.ackerman@me.com>

Dear Marsha,

I want to thank you for taking the time to reach out to us and for sharing your thoughts as well as your experience/knowledge. It is an extremely stressful time for all and I am mindful of the impact of all of our decisions on our students, families, teachers/staff, administration and the community as a whole. While I am new to the Woodbridge community in my two weeks it is clearly evident that your community is involved and passionate. I have heard from many members of the community all with a variety of viewpoints and concerns as each needs to approach their concerns from their own personal situation.

I will share your letter with the BOE.

Respectfully,
Christine Syriac

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