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The other day, a friend and I were discussing the concept of accountability. Specifically, who, if anyone, is culpable for the chaos resulting from a pandemic? To an extent, it feels about as productive as asking why bad things happen to good people . . . or happen at all?

The truth is no one, so far as I am aware, is responsible for creating a pandemic. However, we ARE responsible for doing our part to help mitigate that disaster. One element we can control is deciding whether we thrive as a community sustained by trust and communication . . . or flounder as people merely surviving alongside one another and self-advocating as necessary.

I have read about other districts across the nation that have indeed returned to class on a more full-time basis. And just as many where remote instruction (for those who need it) is a functional option/alternative. The headlines in these cases are not so much HOW communities are tackling educational challenges--but WHY they are able to do it.

For so long, I have heard about what we as community members should do better. Listen more. Open our minds wider. Be kinder. Concede that we resist change. Get the facts straight. Be wary of social media. Simply ask questions and trigger the real conversations.

So, once we (as community members) have attended the Board meetings, sat on the HR selection panels, tried to make heads or tails of multiple changes, and asked for the one-on-one conversations off of social media in an effort to understand them with greater clarity . . . when do you, as the Board and administration, reflect on what you should do better?

I am grateful for the Board members who have been willing to dialogue with me. But I fail to understand what any of you imagine is inspired by leadership exemplified by Twitter debates about mask protocol or blocking both staff and parents from a 205 social media account (though I do not recollect ever having Tweeted with the superintendent a day in my life). I was amused at initially landing on the infamous list that has since been publicized in The Patch, but the greater implications of the act behind it are troubling.

What do you imagine the impact is when leadership is a day late and dollar short in thanking--versus blaming--the teachers and administrators and support staff who make whatever return plans (or lack thereof) get rolled out every other Tuesday somewhat tenable . . . every single day? You have, based on what some of us have perceived, expected gold to be spun from straw. And when it doesn't happen, those people I just named are the first line of defense in answering to unhappy parents.

Why do you imagine social media is where so many of us turn to address concerns about students and jobs and so much else? No one I know has ever sought out Facebook or Twitter as their primary recourse when it came to such significant issues--unless the resources they turned to first felt more like roadblocks than the beginnings of productive solutions.

So I again would ask you--when do you take some of the accountability for life as it is? More to the point, what, if anything, is the plan to address those points that others have already brought to your attention during public comment the past few weeks?

This isn't a blame game, and there are some things such as the pandemic that are beyond our control. But even those are made more manageable by effective support, guidance, and respect . . . by effective leadership. Parents and teachers and students want to get through this and are willing to own challenges and shortcomings . . . but the leadership of our educational community is not a factor we can be accountable for, even if it is one that shapes so much of what matters to us. That culpability lies with district leadership itself, as well as the Board of Education.

Thanks for your time.

Just my needs & opinion. School should be 5 days in person option or 5 days remote option. Why hybrid?

I need to be able to work, and my kids need to be able to learn (in school). It's that simple. And I cannot work from home. And I cannot afford a tutor, nanny, private school, cohort/pod, supervised e-learning, or any of the other options others are partaking in. I'm a single parent and I rely on my kids being in school five days a week between the hours of 8:15 and 3 PM so I'm able to earn a living.

Covid lockdown is affecting our kids mental health. They need to get back into a regular school routine ASAP. Their mental health & learning are at stake. They are refusing e-learning and e-learning is very challenging for all involved, especially those children that have special needs/IEPs.

I don't understand, if they can be in school in-person with hybrid, why can't they be there five days a week? Normal hours? If the park district can host e-learning why can't they be in school?

Please reconsider 5 days ASAP for our children.
Thank You.

My name is Sarah Garcia and I live in the Fischer/Churchville attendance area. The North side. I have lived here long enough to see that Fischer and Churchville, both excellent schools, have long been treated differently than the other schools in the district. This was definitely noticeable during the referendum, when Fischer was granted two new classrooms, even though our school is busting at the seams. The word "disparity" comes to mind. Something that this Board and district administration have supposedly been trying to put an end to.

An easy way to bring equity to our schools, is to recognize them equally. While browsing Twitter this morning, I came across Dr. Moyer's tweets. One, a re-tweet from Ms. Tammaru, welcoming the Sandburg 6th graders back to school. Two were his own - one welcoming back the "freshman" back to York (though which particular freshman he was welcoming remains a mystery), and the other welcoming 6th graders back to Bryan.

So, I come before the Board asking where was the "Welcome Back" for the 6th graders of Churchville? It was a first day back in the building for them as well. While I was not surprised at Churchville being left out, it was still upsetting to me. We are one district, so respect and recognition should be given across the board - no matter which side of town you happen to be on. To many people, this may not seem to be an important issue. It may even come across as petty. But in my 16 years of being a proud member of Elmhurst's north side, I have seen this happen time and time again. And it is time for it to stop.

September 22, 2020

Dear Dr. Moyer, Dr. Bagdasarian, Mr. Wagner, and Members of the District 205 School Board,

I am a parent of a senior female basketball player. I am also a school principal. Whenever a concern arises, I always try to listen to both sides with a wide-lens. Therefore, before writing this letter, I spent a great deal of time assessing the pros and cons of this request. All of us listed below understand that the decisions you have been confronted with this year are unprecedented in nature.

It is our understanding that the decision to allow indoor contact days is being reconsidered on October 1, 2020. We know that you are aware that IHSA has approved contact days for winter sports and that low and medium risk sports are allowed indoor contact days with inner-squad scrimmages. Please see attached link. <https://www.ihsa.org/documents/Fall%202020%20Contact%20Days.pdf>

As we lead into the Winter season, these days are essential in getting the athletes prepared for competition. They were taken away in June due a small number of cases of COVID-19. There is a concern among coaches and parents that our athletes will be behind in training, conditioning, and game/competition preparedness if they are not allowed to participate in contact days beginning October 1, 2020.

All that being said, we understand that contact can lead to COVID-19 however, many of us have children who are currently participating in full contact practices and games with their club teams. COVID-19 has not spread among these teams due to contact with each other or with athletes from other teams during practices or games. Any instances of COVID-19 was traced back to social gatherings outside of the sport.

All of the parents and students listed at the bottom of this letter are willing to take this risk and allow their children to play, as we feel the negative social and emotional impact of not playing outweighs the risk of getting COVID-19. In fact, some of our children have already had COVID-19 and have returned to play. They will tell you that playing is worth the risk.

All of you are parents and many of you are former athletes, so you know that keeping kids engaged in sports and activities increases their motivation in their studies and keeps children from making unhealthy choices. Being active promotes overall positive physical, mental, and emotional health.

We urge you to allow these athletes to participate in the 20 contact days in order to begin preparing for the Winter season and we also ask that you allow inner-squad scrimmaging for low and medium sports.

Thank you for your time,

Tara, Eric, and Kaitlyn Kjome
Laura, Joe, and Grace Maniola
Dana Kircher
Mary and Chris Wagner
Jill and John Hansmann
Sally and Patrick Levins
Christine and Mike Juneman
Erin and Pietro Carillo
Barry and Mollie Rosenstein

Tara and Art Renier
Kraig and Kathy Meyer
Matt and Karen Toole
Scott and Beth Malaga
John and Vicki Julian
Tyler and Dawn Wheatland
Pat and Abby Kohl
Jim, Christy, and Sarah Kesslering
Christine Henrickson

Janet and Neil Doherty

Thank you for all you're doing to help our kids safely resume in-person learning. I trust that this is a fluid plan that is re-evaluated frequently to meet students' needs. As a parent of elementary students, I would like a transparent plan to increase or modify in-person learning as-needed based on criteria, data, and student needs. Waiting until phase 5 is NOT a plan as there is no guarantee that will be coming anytime soon, possibly for months to years.

I encourage the Board and our Administration to be creative and flexible. Learning at school for 2 shortened days and at home for 3 days is not going to lay the successful groundwork for our early elementary learners. This is a crucial time - a time they develop a healthy relationship and love for school, teachers, peers, routines, etc.

Our community has the luxury of data and success stories at countless private schools and daycares that are safely seeing students in-person. If they can do it, we can too.

Although I know you've heard every suggestion and scenario a thousand times, I again want to propose that the next phase be that K-2 students go to school for 2.5 - 3 hours per day for intense core instruction. These students can be seen in the a.m. or p.m. and then use the other half of the day for asynchronous learning. We need to beef up our instruction and good use of time for K-2. This time in a child's life is crucial for brain growth and development as well as developing a love of learning. Sitting in front of a computer screen for 5 hours daily is not a healthy experience for children, does not foster important relationships with peers and teachers, and can impair emotional development.

Every tax payer in Elmhurst has a stake in this game, so let's open up a dialogue about our next steps for improving our educational experience while keeping our children and educational staff safe.

Thank you.

I wanted to thank the Board of Education and Dr. Moyer for listening to all of the feedback over the past few months and doing everything in their power to allow Elmhurst parents choice for their children, whether in-person hybrid learning or entirely remote learning. I also want to thank all of the administration and teachers who are behind all of the efforts to provide in-person learning as well.

For those of us who chose to send our students to in-person learning, it is not lost on us that we are one of the very few public school districts in our county that have this option. I am very grateful to all of you for listening to the CDC and the IDPH that in-person learning was a safe and viable option for those parents who wanted it.

I have a son who has an IEP and has just completed his 6th day of in-person learning at York. Being a teenager, he is not one to say much about anything going on in his life, but he did say that he really likes to be AT York. He has not hesitated once to head into school each morning, in fact he is up earlier each day than any day he had to log onto Zoom.

He said it feels good to be up and out of the house at a decent hour and that being in school is so much better for him in terms of creating a routine. At home, if the teacher gave breaks, he quickly got on his phone or took a nap until the next zoom session. At school, he is able to talk to the teacher in person and establish much more of a relationship than he can through his computer screen. Even after just 6 days, you can tell he is getting to know the teachers better by being in-person. At home when the Zoom sessions were paused or completed for that period, that's that. When in person at school, he is still in that classroom and interacting on a personal level with the teacher until the bell rings. He comes home each day with a more upbeat and positive attitude than he had any day during e-learning, which is excellent for his mental health as well as his academic motivation.

I appreciate that you fought and figured out a way to start getting kids back into our schools.

I know the uphill climb is not over and I highly encourage you to keep on going.

I have one son more who is still waiting for his week to start at York. He is jealous each day when his brother gets to leave for school and he is stuck home with daily internet lags, whether on our side or the school's side. If parents do not want their kids to attend in person, that is their choice. For my family, in person learning creates a happier and more productive teenager...not just productive in academics, but in the rest of his day whether in sports practice or at his workplace. I thank you and appreciate all you have done to make Elmhurst District 205 one of the leaders in our area for a return to in person learning. It is a making a big difference in our family. Thank you!