

12.15.20 Modified Public Comment

Timestamp	First and Last Name	Please enter your comment
12/12/2020 11:18:04	Christine Simonis	Regarding the district questionnaire about saliva testing, I answered that my children will not participate. As a couple board members mentioned at the last meeting, I do not understand how testing will be cost effective for the hybrid model as results of the testing will not have any impact on in-person schooling. With kids staying 6 feet apart and not eating in school, I also do not see how testing would alter any possible quarantines. I do think the testing would be cost beneficial, and would agree to test my children at all three grade levels, if this testing would result in increasing the hours my kids would be in-person. Thank you.
12/12/2020 14:03:05	Liz Heywood	<p>Questions for D205 leaders:</p> <p>1.) Is the district consulting with more than one infectious disease doctor/health care professional regarding the mitigations proposed? It seems there is some disagreement among the "experts" so having a panel of health care professionals come up with safety guidelines during periods of substantial transmission seems more appropriate.</p> <p>ex: Not allowing children (particularly elementary students) to eat a 5 min snack or take a sip of water during a school day seems unreasonable and unusually restrictive. Also, allowing 3-5 ft of spacing, consistent screening policies, mask wearing, etc could allow more children to safely attend school. All guidance (i.e. CDC, IDPH) asks for 6 ft WHEN FEASIBLE. There are many other businesses and schools operating safely without the strict 6ft distancing (i.e. health care providers, dental offices, grocery stores, all private schools in our town, etc.).</p> <p>2.) Has the district explored the use of plexiglass dividers in classrooms to allow more students into school when 6ft is not feasible? This seems like a much more economically viable solution that many private and public schools are using successfully.</p> <p>3.)Has the district considered that an ongoing remote learning environment (including the hybrid model) is not necessarily a "safe" environment for all children in the district?</p> <p>Remote learning was assumed to be safer in the earlier days of the pandemic, but now that there is more data and information regarding covid risk mitigation and the negative impacts of school closures on children, we can no longer assume that remote or hybrid learning is, in fact, the safer alternative.</p> <p>Thank you for your work on behalf of D205 students. These children need you as leaders to advocate for them now more than ever.</p>
12/13/2020 18:20:16	Robyn Pretzie	<p>Good evening,</p> <p>I am a Bryan middle school mom. Wondering first if the kids (my son included) that live in Bryan/sandburg choice area can switch middle schools to sandburg next semester? Will the option be available? This may help numbers go down at Bryan too.</p> <p>Also, can we make it mandatory (maybe for Bryan only because of numbers) that if you chose "in person" your child goes in person unless you call them in sick and are they marked absent. I clearly see kids taking advantage of this situation at York and Bryan "my child didn't feel like going today", " it was cold and my kids are staying home on zoom instead of going to school today"</p> <p>These situations are leaving open desks in classrooms where there are kids at home that want to be in those seats! I also see that parents at Bryan who chose remote 1st semester are scared into checking the "in person" box because they may change their mind in March/April, but need to make that decision now! Maybe have another survey to opt in to "in person" after spring break!??</p> <p>Lastly, I know I am not alone but my 6th grader suffers from severe migraines since the age of 2. Less in person plus more screen time (3:35 end of day) is absurd! My student will be getting a doctors note from his neurologist opting out of "zoom" afternoon e blocks, as I am sure many parents will do too!</p> <p>Thank you for your time and supporting all of our kids in district 205, but most importantly these Bryan kids tonight!</p>

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12/14/2020 9:00:04	anonymous	<p>The hypocrisy of this board continues to be baffling; as a Board, you won't even meet in person to determine whether students and staff should return in person, yet your reasoning for meeting virtually clearly states: "Based on the current public health concerns, the Board President of Elmhurst Community Unit School District No. 205, as head of the public body, has determined that it is neither practical nor prudent to hold an in-person public meeting on December 10, 2020. The Board President has further determined that it is not feasible for the public to be present at the public body's regular meeting location due to the health concerns related to COVID-19." Neither practical, nor prudent to have approximately 20 adults come together, but you believe that it is practical and prudent to bring hundreds of students together in buildings along with upwards of 50 or more staff members for multiple hours a day? Your actions show complete disregard for the safety and health of everyone you want to come back to those buildings as well as their families. The community is not happy with being remote, but the role of the Board of Ed and Superintendent as leaders are to make hard decisions in the best interest of the safety and health of students AND staff. You have to do things and make decisions that will not please everyone, but look at some of the surrounding districts who are making the difficult decisions to remain closed because they do not want to see students and staff sick, or even worse - die because they were too afraid to close. Stevenson High School, Naperville 203 and 204, New Trier...all of those districts have had their leaders say publicly that they will not be responsible for someone dying. You have not made that same statement and it is sad and cowardly that you won't. And just last week, the Superintendent of District 88 died after suffering a stroke due to COVID. The past days have been among the deadliest in American history comparable to 9/11 and World War II, yet you believe it is safe to send people back when you yourself won't leave your homes for a three hour meeting. Families have a decision to keep their children home, but the staff, who are the most at risk as adults, don't have that choice. Shame on you for your selfish, tone-deaf, entitled views that put all of the staff at risk.</p>
12/15/2020 8:59:18	Jean Hogan	<p>As my 1st grader logged into zoom school this morning, she looked at me and said "I hate life".</p> <p>When will D205 put kids and common sense before liability and get these kids back in full in person school? This isn't August. We now have data and studies proving that school is safe. We have experts such as Fauci and the head of the CDC calling for kids to be back in school. We have 4 private Elmhurst schools and surrounding public schools that have successfully made in person school work. Nowhere besides the Dupage County Board of Health website is remote learning recommended-and even then, Dupage County states the decision to reopen schools lies squarely with Dr. Moyer and the Board.</p> <p>Furthermore, nowhere is it recommended that kids do not eat in school. In fact, the AAP and the CDC recommend kids eat in school and list ways this can be done safely. Also, we should not be paying for and implementing saliva testing unless it's for an immediate return to full in person school, not hybrid. Last, there is much evidence that with masks, social distancing less than 6 feet is acceptable. We can use this evidence to support spacing issues at Bryan.</p> <p>In conclusion, this ridiculousness needs to end. Our children have already lost so much. We can choose to put them first and get them back into full in person school immediately.</p>
12/15/2020 10:15:20	Andrea Tepfenhart	<p>To the Board of Education: I applaud your effort to find safe ways to get our children back to school in not only a hybrid status but also full time. To say that this year is stressful for our children, teachers, support staff, parents, and the community is an understatement. However, during the special meeting held last week, an idea of not allowing our children to have snacks during the daytime if there is inclement weather because they would need to lower their masks was brought up. I am truly disheartened by this proposal, as it appears that only the virus is being taken into account instead of the health and safety of the whole child. We are already placing social distancing and other mitigation efforts into place, and I believe the lack of snacks will lead to further harm than good. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the CDC both recommend that children eat/drink every 2 to 3 hours. Without proper nutrition students will lose focus and concentration and may become physically sick. This will cause further disruptions for our teachers and educators on an already shortened school day, and inhibit our children from getting the best education that we have always strived towards. Some alternatives that may allow us to avoid disruptions from hungry students: plexiglass or use of multipurpose rooms. We are a school district that prides ourselves on our commitment to our students and providing the best education possible. Let us continue on the path of excellence, and find a more suitable option for our students than depriving them of nutrition. Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>

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12/15/2020 12:25:05	Maria Salvatore	<p>Dr. Fauci and the CDC now recommend that all children should be in school. If you have read about the increased numbers of mental health diagnoses in young people who are not in school, you know that mental health problems are a pandemic as well. Numerous studies now show that a disproportionate number of minority children and teenagers are impacted. Low income students, students learning English, and students with IEPs are struggling. You know this and the data supports this. I was a teacher at a high school near Elmhurst for fifteen years. If anyone had told me that I would be seeing my students for only two half days plus 30 minutes on Wednesdays, and only through a computer screen, I would have been horrified by that notion. I would have been concerned about my students' mental health, their special needs, the lack of personalized instruction, the lack of a connection to my students and many other factors. The question that I keep coming back to is this: Are teachers essential? Are teachers essential? Are teachers essential? If you are essential, you should be teaching as other essential workers in our hospitals, doctors' offices, post offices, grocery stores, etc. The idea that someone working at Jewel has been there since March and our teachers have been at home is truly dismaying to many of us watching this farce of an education that you claim our children are receiving. Please, I beg of you, read all of the newest data and studies dealing with education and the untold costs to our young people. It may be unlikely that you will have a young person very ill from covid, but you may have a teenager lose his/her life to suicide or you may cause irrevocable damage to students by not supporting them during this difficult time and by not providing them an education. Throughout my time as a teacher, I always advocated for public school funding and helped to secure two federal grants for my school. It is difficult to see now that our Elmhurst public school teachers are unwilling to do what the teachers at Timothy Christian, Visitation, and Immaculate Conception are willing to do and are doing with a great deal of success since the beginning of the school year. Also, it is difficult to see that the families that can afford a private education can secure many more advantages for their children in Elmhurst if they so choose. Knowing this, let's openly admit that the schools of Elmhurst are creating a disparity between those who have advantages and those who do not.</p> <p>What is the single parent family supposed to do when children are learning at home? What is the essential worker to do if his/her children are learning at home?</p> <p>Keep in mind that children with a parent at home are faring much better with remote learning. This is making the gaps greater each day that we waste not supporting the children of Elmhurst in public education. If the private schools in Elmhurst can coordinate efforts to make schooling, which is a right for our children, successful and if schools across the country and in Berkeley right next to us and countless other suburbs, we can do this for our children. As a teacher, a parent, and a lifelong resident of Elmhurst who went to all Elmhurst public schools, I am shocked and outraged that you are willing to let each day go by while all of our young people are staring, bleary eyed, at a computer screen all morning with no education in the afternoon. Please understand that a hybrid education does not mean two half days at school. Please help our children.</p>
12/15/2020 13:45:09	Rachel Mikula	<p>To Whom it May Concern:</p> <p>As you gather to continue discussion about in person learning for district 205 students, I urge you to find a way to make it possible for all students who want to be IN PERSON be there starting in January. The time has come for this option to be rolled out to the fullest extent possible and not taken back. As I am sure you know both private and public schools around the country have been making this happen since August. It is time for district 205 to step it up and figure this out. My husband and I have four daughters in the district that, along with the majority of their peers, need to be IN school. Both their mental health and academic and social successes depend on this. There will always be reasons to say why getting back into the classroom is not going to work, so I plead that you focus on what we can do and make this a reality and take us there. Please, do what is right, and let our children back into the building for in person learning. Thank you.</p>
12/15/2020 14:00:38	Pam Holdman	<p>I'm curious if the board has considered using the money that will be spent on saliva testing- and purchasing plexiglass dividers for the desks? This would protect teachers and students while also giving our kids a safe place to eat a snack. 5 hours of school (more with transportation) is too long for the kids to go without any sort of food/drink to allow them to stay focused. While I understand the saliva testing may give a short sense of security to some- I don't think it's worth the time and money spent in a hybrid schedule. On the other hand- if it is voted that we move forward with the saliva testing for hybrid schedule- please allow those students to eat in their classroom.</p>
12/15/2020 14:07:50	Amy Wellman	<p>Please work on a plan to get our children back in school full time before they fall even further behind. The CDC, Dr Fauci, and countless other experts all agree that it's safe for our masked children to be in school. Consider doing what is right for our district and let the 95% of its students who want to return do so, while keeping the most vulnerable teachers remote as well as any student who is not comfortable going in person. It is my hope that the Board, the Union, and the Superintendent can finally work together to do what is best for the students of this district.</p>
12/15/2020 15:54:26	Jen Geiger	<p>Dr Fauci believes schools should be open. Come on distinct 205, I know you can be creative and get this done for our kids. Other districts in the area are doing it, why can't York? In addition, let's keep up these Wednesday's! Thank you</p>

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12/15/2020 15:56:31	Elizabeth Thompson	<p>To the board of education and administration, I applaud the plan to returned in person learning starting on January 11th. but I would like to challenge some of the things that were brought up at the last meeting. 1. That students need to be 6 ft apart: guidelines among the distancing protocols vary, and the WHO supports a 3-ft minimum which has been successful across Europe. The AAP and other bodies state the distancing is important to the greatest extent possible but should not be a reason to keep children out of in-person learning as that should be prioritized. especially for our youngest learners I believe 3 ft of space with masks on in the classroom is adequate protection. 2. No eating in school: there is no good data nor any other source that states children should not be allowed to eat or drink during the school day. private schools and other areas around the country where public school districts are open have navigated having children eat at their desks without increased spread. please consider short and staggered mask breaks in order to allow our children to maximize their learning environment. It seems unreasonable especially for our youngest children to go a full 5 hours without eating or drinking. 3. Surveillance testing: while I agree this testing adds a piece of information and was very useful to schools that implemented this in September where there was much less data than we have now I believe that using surveillance testing while in the hybrid model will not be useful. Because school outbreaks are so incredibly rare surveillance testing has not shown to prevent any outbreaks especially with the other mitigation strategies. I would support the use of this testing only for a full 5-day in-person model of learning for the students of D205. Another suggestion is to be use that money for plexiglass dividers and getting more kids into our classroom 5 days a week.</p> <p>While some children may be doing well in the e-learning model most are not. Our kids are suffering academically, socially and emotionally without data that supports this as a safe or acceptable alternative. We now have a lot of data and support for the reopening of schools and in regards to the harms we are doing to our children by keeping them closed. We need to stop doing this to our children.</p>
12/15/2020 16:29:52	Anonymous	<p>I preface this with, I totally understand the need to open schools and was neutral until last week. Now, these 3 words cannot leave my head. Dr. Scott Helton. An amazing superintendent of the town next door. A D205 alum with 3 fabulous boys who also went through our schools. A family whose lives will never be the same. A school district of 3900 students that feel the loss. The Elmhurst, Villa Park and Addison communities lost a great man- to complications from COVID.This statement is all over social media</p> <p>"Our Superintendent, Dr. Scott Helton, passed away from complications related to Covid. He protected all of us by advocating to keep us home in the Spring and this current school year. Unfortunately, the very thing he was trying to prevent us from contracting was what ultimately took him from us." I don't want anyone else to feel this pain because we open D205 schools too soon. We are so close to the end. Winter is not the time to bring the kids back. Please wait until the weather improves and cold and flu season is over.</p> <p>I am asking that you think of Dr. Scott Helton throughout every discussion you have tonight. Think of what his family is going through right now. Think of what his colleagues are going through. Think of how his district has been affected. His smiling face, that is all over local media, has not left my mind. He fought his battle with Covid for 2 months and lost.</p> <p>We can wait 2 more months. We were one of the first districts to open in the Fall when the weather was nice. When people's immune systems were not compromised by winter colds or flu. Please do what is right again. Wait until the winter months are over. Teachers and students are getting better and better every day with remote teaching and learning. Two more months. Please. Kids are resilient and can do this for two more months.</p>
12/15/2020 17:10:45	York Parent	<p>Thank you for reading my comment.</p> <p>I wanted to share a struggle my son has been having. For his privacy, I'm not going to identify myself.</p> <p>He has found it very difficult to focus for 70 minutes unsupervised, followed by 5 minutes of transition. I understand that his school for next semester will be moving it up to 75 minutes a period and cutting transition time on Wednesday.</p> <p>I realize that my family's situation may be unique and might not apply to other students. However, I believe total minutes of instructional time is less important than whether they are arranged in a manageable way.</p>

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12/15/2020 17:22:15	Marianne Boyke	<p>Thank you, members of our School Board, for taking the time to consider the many, many voiced concerns of the D205 families. As a parent of both York and Bryan school-aged kids, I'm begging you to do the right thing and go the distance to get our kids back in school in a fair manner, which includes a Bryan AB schedule only, and a quick transition from hybrid to full-time well before Spring Break. The repercussions to our children for every minute they remain remote in any fashion are so far extenuating and serious that they outweigh by a landslide any possible repercussions of Covid, especially in light of the fact that so many other schools right around us, both public and private, are FULL-TIME IN-PERSON and successfully doing so and have been since August! Dr. Moyer is relying on the advice of a single supposed expert whose data is outdated and invalid based on what we all know today and what continuously evolves. He and his so-called expert are nothing but a road block based with no basis for being so. Please do not allow Moyer, or any other person that may agree with him, to decide the fate of our children. They are wrong. They are wrong based on what so many experts and science are saying. Please follow suit of the many other schools that are in-person and act now. Our children's well-being and lives depend on it. They depend on you. You cannot approve an ABC plan for Bryan. It must be an AB plan to be fair and equitable. There are many ways to make that happen including adding plexiglass to classrooms if necessary. Please approve in-person learning with AB hybrid for all to start and a quick transition to full-time in person. There is no reason to wait 3 full months for that to happen. Please act now! Thank you.</p>
12/15/2020 17:33:02	Elise Fulara	<p>Hello BOE Members,</p> <p>I am the parent of a 5th grader at Lincoln and a Freshman at York who are currently remote learning and will likely remain remote learning as long as we remain in substantial, and likely moderate, community spread.</p> <p>First, I would like to thank you for your board service through this trying time for our community. I also want to thank the BOE and Administration for creatively doing what is possible to add "layers" of protection to our schools; the more layers, the more protection, as no layer is impervious. My children will remain remote in January, but I do understand that many other families need to have their children learning in-person and I want them, and my children's teachers and staff, to be as safe as possible. In general, saliva testing seems like one such way to add another precautionary layer until a more robust vaccine rollout and weather that is more cooperative will help drive down COVID-19 community transmission rates. However, I do want to address some concerning comments made by BOE members at the 12/10/20 meeting.</p> <p>First, I want to address comments by BOE Member Jim Collins regarding a Washington Post article referencing 3-feet of social distance being sufficient for schools. I assume he is referencing the piece written by Drs. Joseph G. Allen and Sara Bleich that ran 11/12/2020. If this article is going to be referenced, I feel it is important it is taken in full context and read beyond the headline. The scientists are quoted as noting a "...significant reduction in risk with distancing of at least three feet, but no additional benefit at six feet so long as baseline risk is low enough." This means that 3-foot social distancing is NOT acceptable when a community is experiencing significant or even moderate community transmission. The article goes on to discuss many other critical infrastructure requirements such as universal, 3-layer masks, teachers remaining distanced 6-feet from students, and no in-person adult meetings. I am concerned when a headline is brought up to make a point but the full context of the science contained therein is dismissed. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/11/12/three-feet-social-distancing-schools-coronavirus/</p> <p>I am also concerned when I hear sentiments such as those expressed by Chris Kocinski that saliva testing may be a way to get children back into schools "full time" which contradicts public health guidance that suggest alternative models that allow for 6-feet of social distancing in classrooms due to continued elevated community spread. I agree that hybrid and split schedules aren't ideal, but the 6-foot social distance, specifically for the middle and high school students, does appear to be pretty critical. A saliva test can not overcome the fact that community spread is elevated.</p> <p>There are some basic tenets of public health guidance that will not change until we are all of the way through this pandemic: masking, hand washing, and social distancing. We all want to this over, but this cannot be achieved with shortcuts. The data must be our guide.</p> <p>Thank you for your time, Elise Fulara</p>
12/15/2020 17:33:25	Lindsay Burrell	<p>My first grader is struggling more and more each day. He does not learn anything from an iPad and is struggling learning the basics. His teacher is doing everything she can, but it's not enough. These kids deserve a fair and equal education. I cannot believe this district is doing such a disservice to our children. Get them back to school full time with in-person instruction! Let the parents decide if they go to school or not. Also, please don't deny them a snack if they go back to school and the weather is bad. This is getting ridiculous.</p>

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12/15/2020 17:51:18	Meredith Vogel	<p>Dear Board and Administration. Thank you for the continued work to get our kids back to school. I feel like we are making some progress while the timing has not been ideal. Can you please tell the community why plexiglass is not being considered to resolve the classroom capacity issue at Bryan? This has been a successful measure in many districts and private schools in our community where 6 feet is always not possible. Additionally, can you please clarify if you are using the Bryan gym and cafe as classrooms to help address the capacity issues. We are in a state of emergency and need to come up with creative ideas. I suggest you implement these to get Bryan back to at least an AB schedule.</p> <p>Thank you, Meredith vogel</p>
12/15/2020 17:57:38	Rebecca Harpster	<p>First, thank you for all you are doing, and all you are enduring in this challenging time. Thank you, also, for reinstating live public comment. I am not able to take advantage of it because I am attending my Bryan 6th grader's first choir concert via Zoom tonight.</p> <p>Second, I implore you, with every decision you make tonight, to do as the D205 mission statement says and make decisions on what is best for students. I truly believe if we put the students first, the answers to the difficult questions becomes much easier. 90% of families (your customers) want to send their children to school in person. The unique thing about these customers is that they also represent 80% of your funding, so they are your investors too. When the vast majority of your customers and your investors want the same thing, why aren't we doing our best to meet their needs? Why aren't we acting in the best interest of the students, many of whom are struggling on a daily basis with remote learning? Why can't we look to the many in-person districts, like nearby Oakbrook, for guidance? Why can't we look to the Diocese of Joliet Catholic Schools, who serves almost twice the population of D205, 80% of whom are going to school five full days per week of in person with very little to no transmission within their schools? Why are we using one medical specialist who has stricter guidance than even the CDC and the WHO? Why are we allowing him to hold us firm to the 6-ft guidance when the CDC says 6-ft *if feasible*, the WHO recommends 3ft 3in *if possible*, and the American Academy of Pediatrics says that schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to the 6-ft rule with the downsides of remote learning? And downsides, there are many: headaches, eye strain, anxiety, depression, and reduced physical activity are just a few. Remote learning is not in the best interest of our students. Please put the students at the front of this conversation. Our students need your help. Thank you for your consideration.</p>
12/15/2020 18:40:05	Michelle Shoemaker	<p>Our kids, all grades need to be back in school 5 days a week. All data released says this very thing. Their education and mental health is severely suffering and they are at risk the longer this remote or hybrid learning continues. It is clear that there are members in leadership that DO want our kids back in school. Yet we are stuck. We are not aggressive and we are NOT using the resources and the FACTS available that state school is the safest place to be. And sports? THEY NEED THIS. Let the 15% that want to stay home, stay home. Let the rest of the kids live their life, be educated and be healthy, MENTALLY. What is happening to my kids and to others as a result of your decisions to stay remote is unforgivable and frankly embarrassing for a town that is this highly educated. It is time to do better for our kids futures.</p>
12/15/2020 19:12:30	Lara Bogenrief	<p>Is it possible to reorganize the hybrid structure so teachers do not have to teach to children at home and in the classroom at the same time? When parents were asked to fill out a survey asking to list their preference for hybrid schedule earlier last summer it was not made clear that this would be the circumstance. I would change my preference to half-days in order to have my child go to school more often and not have their teacher split in half when they are in school. Additionally, we would like to see more time devoted to mathematics instruction and less time on specials (gym, art, etc).</p>