

1.12.21 Public Comment-rev1

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1/10/2021 18:28:12	Elise Fulara	<p>Hello D205 Board of Education Members,</p> <p>As we work towards the goal of safely and fully re-opening D205 schools for all students, teachers, staff, and administration, please take a moment and remember that leadership is not only knowing one's strengths, but also being aware of one's limitations. As I read the bios of the current D205 Board Members, I see many strengths and much expertise with strong backgrounds in finance, organizations, business, and education. However, I see very little that would suggest members possess strong backgrounds demonstrating scientific or public health proficiencies, and the situation at hand demands a fundamental understanding of both. To that end, I would like to share the following two evidence-based resources with D205 Board Members, so that they may undergo a 'crash course' to help improve their ability to make decisions about safe re-opening, rather than simply pushing forward under community pressure when it might not be the right time to do so.</p> <p>The first resource comes from Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health and was created as a series of self-paced modules for schools and school districts to bring decision makers "up to speed" on what they need to know to open schools safely. The modules are here: https://schoolhealth.jhu.edu/covid19_resources/modules/</p> <p>The second resource is from the Harvard School for Public Health. It is a report that was updated in November 2020 and discusses the three feet of social distancing that some BOE members have casually discussed at meetings. It should be strongly noted that the report only sanctions three feet social distancing during times of minimal community spread which we are not currently experiencing in the D205 area. Other things that might safely allow a context for three feet of social distancing include universal and strict masking, air filtration (inc. portable classroom-based filters) as well as improved ventilation, the implementation of testing, cleaning, student hygiene, and other policies and practices that help keep schools safer and healthy. It should also be noted that transmission occurs differently in grade school-aged children than it does for middle and high-school aged children - with older children able to transmit more like adults and therefore, social distancing requirements for middle and high schools should be maintained at adult levels of six feet per the report. It is available for download here: https://schools.forhealth.org/risk-reduction-strategies-for-reopening-schools/download/</p> <p>I do hope all of the BOE Members take the time to fully utilize these resources so that they can begin to demonstrate and employ more informed decision making on safely reopening our schools than they have expressed at past meetings. It is relieving that teachers and school staff will be included as part of the IL 1b Vaccination Plan, but the roll out may be somewhat rocky and we must be patient and plan accordingly. Safely and fully reopening is ultimately the goal that we all share.</p> <p>Thank you for your time, Elise Fulara</p>
1/11/2021 14:44:38	Jacki Connor	<p>Is it necessary to make kids go outside to eat snack in this freezing weather? 10 degrees is absurd. If they are spaced equally in the classroom, why aren't they able to just eat at their desks?</p>
1/11/2021 15:17:22	Liz Heywood RN, MSN	<p>Thank you for getting schools open in a hybrid model. Please consider opening schools fully and without excessive restrictions such as outdoor snack times in the middle of winter. My first grader said today "everyones hands were so red during break because it was hard to wear gloves while eating." I encourage any board member or administrator to each their lunch outside with no table/chair the next several days if they feel this is an appropriate request for the youngest students. D205 seems to have lost its way, as care and compassion for children has been replaced with red tape. There is no amount of academic achievement or degree that can instill compassion in children—it has to be demonstrated by the adults around them. Please base any and all decisions going forward solely on the best interest of the kids in this community. Thank you for your time and your hard work.</p>
1/11/2021 16:13:44	Anthony Gomez	<p>Hello to the D205 administrative staff. My name is Anthony Gomez and I am the parent of two D205 students. I am writing because I want to address concern about safety protocols regarding students eating "snacks" outside. There is currently a photo circulating of kindergarten students from Field Elementary eating outside on the ground in 25 degree temperatures. This is unacceptable and personally I am putting the onus for this on the District leadership for implementing this safety measure. If students can be socially distanced in their classrooms, why can't they do the same in the school cafeteria or gymnasium to do the same to eat. Now my wife and I have to make a decision to physically go to my son's school and have him eat his snack inside of a warm car to avoid him having to sit outside in the cold for 30 minutes. I truly believe D205 can do better. I understand none of the current circumstances are easy and conducive to providing outcomes that everyone will be happy with, but I am sure that the majority of us are in agreement that this solution to having snack for students is unacceptable.</p>

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1/11/2021 16:47:19	Gosia Furman	D205 Board & Administration - Have you seen the conditions in which D205 students eat their snacks outside? Let me paint a picture for you... They eat their food sitting for 30 minutes on dirty concrete sidewalks, shivering, trying to put food into their mouths with frozen fingers. How is this acceptable? This is absolutely unbelievable and horrifying. Why are you putting our children through this? Other school districts and private schools allow children to eat at their desks or gyms, as recommended by the CDC and AAP. Why do D205 students have to be treated with such cruelty? If students must eat outside, why aren't there tents with heaters set up for them? PLEASE... drive around your schools during snack time and see how your students are treated! Maybe you will find it in your heart to stop this madness...
1/11/2021 17:19:02	Jennifer Cuffe	I'd like to express my extreme outrage at the stupidity of forcing these children to eat snack outside. My first grade son came home today starving because he was too cold to eat outside. How is this a good idea? The children will continue not to eat, as well as be forced to be outside for a full snack break. How will this not contribute to their increased chance of illness? Why can't they eat at their desks in their classroom? What proof is there that this ridiculous decision has any validity and is healthy for the children? I'd like to see the proof and understand why our district cannot seem to follow the positive guidance from other local schools who seem to be able to do so with positive results. This needs to be corrected ASAP.
1/11/2021 17:29:09	Crystal Godfrey	Outdoor snacks during the winter is unhealthy and inhumane. Parents will come up with whatever funds are needed to buy air purifiers for the rooms, plexiglass for the desks, or whatever more feasible option we can find to allow our children to eat a healthy snack indoors. The school day is already stressful enough for students and teachers with the current pandemic. Do not put more undue stress and fear into our children. My first grader does not want to go back to school after having had his first outdoor snack. I can not stand by as a mother and see my family and all of the other district families have to function in this way when we can point to thousands of other schools that are not following this outdoor snack procedure. People are eating indoors in almost every other state- do not let Illinois policy on indoor dining affect the young school children who need their healthy brain break.
1/11/2021 18:34:04	G Anderson	<p>As a parent of an all-day Emerson Kindergartener, I am appalled at the recent actions our D205 schools have taken as part of the return to hybrid learning with the approach taken on lunch and eating. My child's classroom was forced to go outside in freezing temperatures and sit on the ice-cold ground for an extended period of time in order to eat snack. They were not allowed to return inside after finishing their snack or were not old enough to know that they should have asked to go back inside. I heard from my child and many other parents at the school that the children were freezing cold, shivering, unable to eat properly, and miserable. With a temperature at freezing (32) and a wind chill of 21 degrees at that time of day, I have a hard time understanding what the school or district defines as inclement weather and if common sense is being used in making these decisions? The American Academy of Pediatrics rightly states that children are less able to regulate their body temperatures than adults, and children exposed to extreme cold can quickly develop dangerously low body temperatures.</p> <p>It is frustrating given the fact that I know other parents who have volunteered their time, resources, supplies and labor to install plexiglass in the classrooms at our school only to have been turned down for no apparent reason. Why, over the past two months when we have been fully remote, has the school not been adding protective measures to the classroom such as plexiglass dividers so that the kids could have their nutrition safely met indoors? It certainly cannot be a lack of money given the bond referendums, property tax increases in 2021, and surplus within the operating fund which sits at \$50 million dollars.</p> <p>Why is Elmhurst the only school that cannot figure out how to safely eat indoors? CPS, schools in other suburbs and private schools in Elmhurst all seem to be doing fine and are allowing eating indoors. It's bad enough that the district has prevented our children from eating an actual lunch during the day, and has whiplashed our kids back and forth between hybrid and remote with little regard for the impact on them and the parents. The CDC provides guidelines for safe eating indoors in classroom environments that D205 schools should have no issues meeting.</p> <p>Our children deserve better than this. I used to be proud of our Elmhurst schools, and now I am embarrassed at how poorly the school district and board have handled almost every aspect of dealing with this pandemic. It's time for the board, teachers, and administrators to sit outside on a block of ice for 30 minutes, and then reconsider their policy or submit their resignation.</p>

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1/11/2021 21:35:54	Natalie Escamilla	<p>I am wondering why and who made the decision for our children to only be allowed to eat outside? Additionally, why are they only given 35 minutes of break time during the day? In regard to snacks and lunch - research tells us that our kids need to eat during the day to be successful and to learn. There are many articles, papers, dissertations, etc., that detail the importance of food during the school day. According to The National Education Association, "Food is a need, not a want, and if we want kids to be able to concentrate and grow and be healthy and happy, we must see to it that they are fed." Our children are now being told to eat in freezing weather. It was 13 degrees when my son went outside yesterday, and he said he couldn't feel his fingers. How is it that schools across the country are allowing kids to eat? How is it that Mary Queen, ONE parking lot across the street from Emerson, is allowing kids to eat inside? How is it that every private school is doing the same, and has done so successfully all year long? Whoever passed this mandate is doing a terrible disservice to our children. It's not fair, it makes no sense, and it completely contradicts what pediatricians recommend. This has to change. Why are we not spacing the kids out and rotating time in libraries, multi-purpose rooms, gyms and cafeterias? My sister is a principal in another school, and that is what they are doing - why has that not been an option?</p> <p>In regard to breaks - one 35-minute break is not enough. Again, study after study say that kids need breaks and recess. Rebecca A. London, an associate professor of sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz and William Massey, an assistant professor in the College of Public Health and Human Sciences at Oregon State University, wrote an article in "EdSource" and stated, "Recess is where children exercise their bodies and practice their social and emotional skills. Negotiating who goes first in tetherball, resolving whether the ball is in or out in soccer, coping with sadness or anger after losing in four-square and learning to be empathetic when a friend is sad all contribute to students' positive development. These peer connections through play contribute to student healing." They conclude, "When schools reopen, recess and other play-based break times must be incorporated into the learning environment. Social support and physical activity help buffer children's stress response, which will be needed." This is the opposite of what we are doing for our children, and it's not right. I have asked in multiple school board meetings, and am asking again, please consider giving our kids more breaks during the day - their mental, social, emotional and education states need it.</p>
1/11/2021 21:39:34	Kristin and Mike Dudley	<p>We currently have a half day kindergartener in Jackson Elementary. This is our first experience interacting with District 205, the board, the staff and the teachers. Unfortunately we have been extremely disappointed in the lack of focus that has been put on the children of Elmhurst and their education. Let me specify that our disappointment is not with the teachers as they have gone above and beyond to do their best but only so much can be done with a 5 year through a computer screen. The disappointment is from the Board and the Superintendent that have the ability to make the right decision for our children based on the data and have chosen not to do so. However we are extremely fortunate that other local organizations have been there to step up for our child when the District school is currently failing them. She has the ability to attend an organization for supervised e-learning and then gets to interact with her peers as it has been shown through data that is safe to do so with children and following the right protocols. Again, we only have a half day kindergartener and she went to an excellent daycare for 4 years and we know the education she received at this establishment is going to keep her from being too far behind.</p> <p>Today was her first day back in person hybrid. Leaving today she kept telling me she had the best day and couldn't wait to go back tomorrow. I haven't seen this type of excitement with school since she first was able to meet her teacher in person back in Fall. As we only have one child currently in District 205 we do have 2 daughters that will be following in the years to come. We had never considered looking at alternatives to the public schools as this is the reason we chose to move and raise a family in Elmhurst. We are willing to look past her kindergarten year but if we don't start to see from the District putting these children first we may need to look at the highly praised private schools. Those along with other districts in Dupage County have proven to the community schools can be opened safely and these children can be in person. I hope beginning the hybrid schedule again is just the start of getting these children back in school fulltime and restoring the trust parents can have in District 205.</p> <p>One side comment as I am so grateful that this does not apply to my child but I saw the children sitting on the ground in the winter cold today eating their snack as I picked up my kindergartener. It was an extremely sad scene as that is unnecessary and unfair to these children.</p>
1/12/2021 1:31:25	Jennifer Witts	<p>My concern is with the breaks and lunch (or lack thereof) for the students. I assume that the decision to force children to eat lunch outside in the cold winter months or forgo their lunch is grounded in research. Can the Board please point me to the research where it is dangerous for students to eat inside when socially distanced and that it is better for children to eat outside in freezing temperatures or not eat at all? I would also like to understand what research supports only one break for children during a 5 hour school day. Both of my children attend other private childcare facilities (YMCA and Elmhurst Academy) and they do not have this policy in place. Children are allowed to eat inside so long as they are socially distanced. To date, there have been zero cases of COVID transmitted through snack or lunch time (and yes, they eat multiple times a day inside). I ask the Board to consider their own comfort if they had to go without lunch all day or be forced outside to eat in below freezing temperatures. And if there is no research to support this policy, why are you making these kids suffer?</p>

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1/12/2021 10:42:03	Christopher Witts	<p>D205's policy of reducing breaks during school hours and forcing students to eat outside, while temperatures are below freezing, are not in the best interest of the student. These policies should be reconsidered as a matter of urgency. The Elmhurst area has many private education facilities which are running smoothly and are not experiencing outbreaks of COVID related illness without resorting to eating outside. Elmhurst Academy, The YMCA, Kensington School all manage to maintain COVID protocols and allow students to eat inside. None of these facilities has experienced an outbreak which has forced closure in the last 6 months. Why is D205 so different?</p> <p>Students need to be well fed to learn. Hunger does not contribute to a good teaching environment, and certainly in the case of our son, hunger causes mood swings and a significant loss of concentration. He gets 'hangry'. Couple this with being forced to eat a packed lunch in 28°, among the snow - and you have significantly reduced the student's ability to be taught.</p> <p>Are the teachers following the same protocol? Are they all eating outside with the students, socially distanced? If they are not, then why not? Surely, if it's good enough for our elementary school students, it should be good enough for them. Leading by example. I would expect nothing less from our educators.</p> <p>Perhaps the teacher's union needs to make concessions to put the students interests above their own. Perhaps the data, from schools that are allowing students to eat inside, shows that it can be managed safely and in a controlled environment without mass outbreaks.</p> <p>If our educators wish to be treated and revered like the essential workers we all believe them to be, then they need to act like it. There are no threats of lawsuits from Doctors, Nurses or medical administration support staff when asked to carry out their jobs. Nor from grocery store workers, Elmhurst city workers or the myriad of other essential employees that our educators receive the benefit of their work from.</p> <p>Is the teacher's union really suggesting that their members need to be treated differently to grocery store workers?</p> <p>Teaching is a challenging profession – no doubt, but it is more than the transmission of information. It's about setting the correct conditions to learn, inspire, coach and encourage.</p> <p>"We're ready to teach" an email several months ago proclaimed. This D205 parents is throwing down the challenge – "Let's see it".</p>
1/12/2021 16:05:15	Erin Stratton	<p>What metric has to change for the children to be able to eat indoors? What Physician or group of Physicians is influencing this decision? As a parent, it is hard to make the choice of remote or in-person school when essentially it comes down to which is worse: hunger and discomfort during the day, or the importance of in-person learning and socialization. Looking forward to this being addressed. Thank you for your time.</p>

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1/12/2021 18:01:41	Mike Muisenga	<p>As we draw nearer to almost the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic start, it was somewhat of a glimmer of hope to see our schools start to accept our children back in our schools this week. I write this after just today registering all 3 of my children for private school for the 2021/2022 school year due to the uncertainty of what next school year will look like in SD205. It has been a challenging 11 months for all of us, in all professions and all walks of life. One of the biggest effects of the pandemic is the dissidence among everyone. I feel like the pandemic has brought out the worst in everyone. I wish for healing and a light at the end of a very short tunnel in the near future.</p> <p>I first want to say when the pandemic began and our children were sent home in mid-March 2020, where they remained for the rest of the 2019/2020 school year, I think I am in the vast majority of parents that felt that was the correct and safest decision for students, staff and all SD205 personnel. The Virus was new, and little was known on how it spread and how dangerous it was. It is now almost a year into this pandemic. We have a vaccine being deployed and teachers are up next. We have however learned a lot about COVID-19 and with continued, reasonable precautions, we have conclusive data that tells us the schools need to be fully open immediately. Everyone has been "touched" by COVID, whether that is by COVID itself or through the impact it has had on our daily lives. Frequently we are hearing about suicides, drug & alcohol abuse, child abuse, mental health, etc. The cost of isolating our children from their friends, classmates, and teachers is causing far more damage than COVID itself.</p> <p>These comments probably are not vastly different from many other parents. What I would like to offer is a plan for the future of our kids as it relates to their education, mental health, and long-term growth in what life has in store for them. Given we have had less than a month of in-person learning in almost 1 years' time, I wanted to see of the BOE/SD205 has thought of keeping all students (grades K-12) in the same grade for next school year? My fear of just shuffling our kids to the next grade is they will never "catch up" and the long-term impact will be a generation that is a year behind academically, socially, and emotionally. It is unrealistic to expect the children and the teachers to drastically change the curriculum and pace to absorb all they would need to be able to be where they would be if this all never happened. It would give children in once of a lifetime grades the chance to not miss out of things like prom, athletics, clubs, and exceling like they would have they had a normal last year. Families will not be financially burdened by potentially missing out on scholarship opportunities. Another consideration is that the district is also planning on tearing down and rebuilding Lincoln Elementary and other building improvements throughout the school district next year. This will further complicate, exacerbate and put a high burden on the district to make up what was lost in the last year. I understand that this is a major ask and would require a lot of thought and work to implement but I think it is an option we must put on the table. Simply moving our kids forward like this past year never happened is not fair to them nor the teachers that will be asked to completely overhaul their curriculum next year.</p> <p>I respectfully ask for your consideration, Mike Muisenga Parent of 3 (Madison and Jefferson)</p>
1/12/2021 18:16:35	Emma Smith	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I respectfully suggest that District 205 needs to do more to retain top management talent by creating a positive and empowered work environment.</p> <p>Consider the human resources director that D205 recently poached from Beverly Hills Unified School District. Over winter break, he could have been at a staff Christmas party doing shots with the people who teach movie stars' children.</p> <p>Instead, he is in Elmhurst forced to dodge calls and avoid e-mails from teachers asking about FMLA.</p> <p>Working conditions like that are not how you hold on to great people.</p> <p>Regards, Emma Smith</p>

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		<p>Dear Board & Superintendent. As a parent of D205 children I have a few asks of you all. I do not think it is your responsibility to provide medical advice or to provide a POV on what you think you think is safest for our children from a medical perspective unless you have a medical degree. I was disheartened listening to the board of education meeting last month where a board member said they "don't feel comfortable with social distancing less than 6 ft". Frankly I don't think its your job or within your qualifications to decide what is safest for my children or any child for that matter. It IS your job however to consult to with medical experts on what is safest for our children and to put together a plan based on EXPERT advice on what is best for our communities children. And in my POV I don't think you are doing that. So i am going to ask you to do a few things: 1) Please put together a panel/group of medical professionals to provide guidance on your school reopening plan and metrics. This should not be influenced by 1 individual but a collective group 2) please provide line of sight of the community of who is providing guidance on the plan AND what that guidance is in writing 3) Please take another look at the published guidance by the CDC and WHO in regards to re-opening schools specifically in regards to social distancing. When those governing bodies of COLLECTIVE MEDICAL Professionals state 3 ft of social distancing is sufficient to get children back in school I want you to answer to the public on why you are mandating 6ft and please tell me it is backed by medical advice and not just "what you are comfortable with". Please work together with those infectious disease doctors who are wanting to get our children back in school full time and provide a remote option for those of you who do not feel "comfortable" sending your own children.</p>
1/12/2021 19:06:18	Laura Miller	THANK YOU!
1/12/2021 19:43:51	Michael Potvin	Hd