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# Professionals, experience, expertise, and Leadership all matter!

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email: Thomas C.

Wednesday, December 2, 2020 at 12:32:20 PM Eastern Standard Time

To: email: "kloveless@lexrich5.org" , email: "ngardner@lexrich5.org" , email: "rhines@lexrich5.org" , email: "mhogan@lexrich5.org" , email: "chuddle@lexrich5.org" , email: "ewhite@lexrich5.org" , email: "jhammond@lexrich5.org"  
Cc: email: "csmelton@lexrich5.org Christina Melton"

Dear D5 Board,

- D5's administrative staff are hired with the expertise and experience to oversee district operations. Dr. Melton and her team have put in a significant and conscientious effort to make recommendations to modify D5's COVID Reentry over the next 2 weeks in accordance with DHEC/CDC guidelines.

- Exercising your recently-approved power to overrule staff-recommended data- and operations-driven changes to COVID Reentry might come with legal peril for you and D5.

- Consider what happens if someone dies from COVID-19, their family proves transmission happened at a D5 school, and the record reflects that you overruled Dr. Melton's recommendations without sufficient expertise-based cause?

- Each of you has and is entitled to your own opinion regarding COVID-19 and its mitigation in our high schools vs. the importance of in-school instruction.

But I would suggest to serve as D5's leaders you must (1) Check your personal opinions including your "science" and your politics regarding COVID-19 at the meeting room door, and (2) Focus on serving all D5 families, each of which has their own opinions that may or may not agree with yours.

Putting students first means representing all D5 families, asking good questions for clarification, but ultimately as a board you must realize the importance of reaching consensus with staff so you can approve their final recommendations.

As tempting as it might be to substitute your own opinions for those of the district's professionals, I do not think it models leadership for our children, their families, or our teachers. And it could prove disastrous for you and for D5.

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Cathy Huddle <[chuddle@lexrich5.org](mailto:chuddle@lexrich5.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: What does it mean to sit on a board?  
**Date:** November 30, 2020 at 10:13:18 PM EST

**To:** Thomas C

I would like to be crystal clear on my position on the changes to reentry that were presented to the board for approval tonight.

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- 1) Thinking always in terms of "children first"
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Because I was not given the information by school, I have absolutely no idea if staffing and quarantine rates are more of an issue at one school or district wide. Without that information, I could not in good conscious vote to push all children in all middle and high schools back to hybrid.

Assuming we are provided school level data, I am ready and willing to meet again to review any recommended changes to reentry.

Thank-you,  
Catherine

On Mon, Nov 30, 2020 at 9:42 PM Thomas C wrote:

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How can Dr. Melton remain in the environment you have created? Once she leaves you will have a very hard time recruiting a competent educator to take a superintendent job that requires dealing with an activist board of non-professionals who think they know better than staff.

But before you get to recruit a new superintendent, you will first have to face the COVID-19 disaster brewing in D5's high schools.

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Catherine Huddle  
Lexington Richland Five School Board Trustee

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**email: Thomas C.**

**Sunday, December 13, 2020 at 3:06:53 PM Eastern Standard Time**

To: email: "kloveless@lexrich5.org" , email: "ngardner@lexrich5.org" , email: "rhines@lexrich5.org" , email: "mhogan@lexrich5.org" , email: "chuddle@lexrich5.org" , email: "ewhite@lexrich5.org" , email: "jhammond@lexrich5.org"  
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Dear D5 Board,

I wanted my daughter [REDACTED] to have a normal senior year, in-person with sporting events, daily interactions with her friends, etc., and a suite of long-ago planned courses to prepare her for college. Importantly, she and many seniors like her had to choose "hybrid instruction" to get the courses they needed, regardless of our family's risk for COVID-19.

There should be quantifiable COVID-19 improvement metrics, such as a reduction in daily COVID-19 cases from D5 zip codes or reduced test positivity, that are required before changing instructional models, not just dates on the calendar. The spike in cases since Thanksgiving suggests we should stay hybrid in our secondary schools until we see improvement within D5.

Y'all as community leaders have a strong voice in helping bring our community together on this!

If you can lead your constituents to get on-board with better COVID mitigation, then you can take credit for getting us back to face-to-face instruction *safely* as daily case counts decline instead of increase!

As stated by Dr. Melton and her staff in the last two board meetings, the hybrid model allows for some in-person instruction while minimizing “close contacts” between students, maintaining two cohorts of students who do not physically overlap at school, and ultimately reducing the # of students who must quarantine.

It is positive that you approved Dr Melton’s recommendations at your 12/2 meeting, but the delay in going back to hybrid, first by Dr. Melton having to request an emergency meeting to seek board approval, and second by failing to approve it on 11/30, has lead to significantly more quarantining students and staff, and likely more COVID cases in D5.

Hopefully D5’s new COVID-19 dashboard will help give you needed regular updates on our schools, but I strongly urge you to allow Dr. Melton and her team to react to rapidly changing conditions and make the best decision *at the time it needs to be made!*

Your trusting Dr. Melton means D5’s students, families, and staff will be safer, and we will return to face-to-face instruction, something we all agree we want, faster and without having to backtrack again.

Thomas C  
D5 parent

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Dear D5 Board,

Regarding the one agenda item for your "special" called meeting tonight....

Yesterday it was announced that FDA will approve the Pfizer vaccine for kids aged 12-15 perhaps within a week.

If I was a parent of a child younger than 16, I would be outraged that my child could be exposed to COVID with just over 1 month left in school because face-coverings are made optional, and my child being fully vaccinated is also a little more than month away.

Why change the face-covering policy now? Assuming the FDA approval happens, by fall, all families with kids 12 and older can choose a vaccination to protect their child if masking is to be optional.

The right thing for a school board to do would be to request that *Dr. Melton* re-evaluate the district's policy on face-coverings and ensure they are consistent with CDC/DHEC public health policies.

This week is Teacher Appreciation week, and teacher contracts are due in a week. And the more you substitute your non-professional opinions and overrule District staff, the less attractive a district D5 becomes to families and educators alike.

Surely you can see that the optics of what you are doing are not good for D5 or for yourselves as a board.

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