

**Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District
Re-Organization Meeting January 4, 2021 – 6:30 PM
REMOTE – Participation Information Available on the District’s Website**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Thomas M. Venanzi, Interim Board Secretary at 6:30 pm.

II. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

The Board Secretary led all in the Pledge to the Flag.

III. OPENING STATEMENT

“The New Jersey Open Public Meeting Law was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or agreed upon. In accordance with the provision of this act, the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Board of Education advertised this meeting on September 9, 2020 in the Asbury Park Press and the Star Ledger. This notice was sent to the Municipal Clerks of the Borough of Matawan and the Township of Aberdeen, and the Matawan-Aberdeen Public Library. The notice was also placed on the district’s web site.”

Mr. Venanzi announced the unfortunate passing of Board member, Randi Moore this past weekend. A moment of silence in memory of Ms. Moore was held.

IV. CERTIFICATION OF ELECTION RESULTS

The Board Secretary read the official results of the Annual School District Election held on Tuesday, November 3, 2020:

Official Results of Matawan-Aberdeen Regional Board of Education Members

Election of Board Members	Votes Cast
Dr. John P. Delaney (Aberdeen)	5,168
Ms. Allison Friedman (Aberdeen)	6,514
Ms. Radmila Grinberg (Aberdeen)	3,069
Write-In (Aberdeen)	39
Mr. Kevin Ahearn (Matawan)	2,010
Ms. Rachel Schienvar	1,612
Write-In (Matawan)	35

Combined Statement of Results for 2020

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board have the Combined Statement of Results of the 2020 School Election made part of the annual organization meeting minutes.

V. OATH OF OFFICE

The Board Secretary conferred the Oath of Office upon the following newly elected Board Members:

Dr. John P. Delaney	3 Year Term
Ms. Allison Friedman	3 Year Term
Mr. Kevin Ahearn	3 Year Term

VI. ROLL CALL

Name	Term Expires*
Mr. Kevin Ahearn	January 2025
Ms. Annette Ascoli	January 2023
Dr. Jeff Delaney	January 2025
Ms. Allison Friedman	January 2025
Ms. Tara Martinez	January 2023
Mr. John Montone	January 2022
Ms. Kizzie W. Osborne	January 2023
Ms. Shari Whalen	January 2022

*At the Re-Organization Meeting of the calendar year

VII. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

The Board Secretary called for nominations for the office of Board President.

Call for Nominations:

Mr. Ahearn **Nominated by:** Ms. Friedman

The Board Secretary did not receive any other nominations and nominations were closed.

Close Nominations:

Motion: Dr. Delaney **Seconded:** Ms. Friedman

It was approved by a unanimous roll call vote to close nominations

VOTE FOR ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

It was approved by a unanimous roll call vote to elect Mr. Ahearn as President of the Board of Education.

VIII. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENT

Mr. Ahearn assumed the chair and conducted the remainder of the meeting.

Call for Nominations:

Ms. Ascoli **Nominated by:** Ms. Osborne

The Board President did not receive any other nominations and nominations were closed.

Close Nominations:

Motion: Dr. Delaney **Seconded:** Ms. Osborne

It was approved by a unanimous roll call vote to close nominations

VOTE FOR ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENT

It was approved by a unanimous roll call vote to elect Ms. Ascoli as Vice-President of the Board of Education.

IX. ACTION ITEMS

A motion was moved by Ms. Friedman and seconded by Dr. Delaney. The following items were then approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

1. Adoption of Official Newspapers

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Board of Education authorize the Asbury Park Press and the Star Ledger be adopted as the official newspapers to be used for the advertisement of meetings and legal ads and all other necessary public notifications for the 2021 calendar year.

2. Parliamentary Procedures

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Board of Education adopt Roberts Rules of Order as the official parliamentary procedure manual to be used to conduct meetings and appoint the board secretary and the board attorney to act as the parliamentarians for the 2021 calendar year.

3. Board Policies/Regulations

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Board of Education approve the adoption of all existing Board Policies and Regulations.

4. Authorized Signatures

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Board of Education authorize the following signatures for money market, checking and savings accounts:

Accounts	Authorized Signature
Custodian/General Account	Treasurer of School Monies (Facsimile) and Board President (Facsimile) or Board Secretary (Facsimile)
Payroll Agency Account	Treasurer of School Monies (Facsimile) and Board President (Facsimile) or Board Secretary (Facsimile)
Payroll Account	Treasurer of School Monies (Facsimile) and Board President (Facsimile) or Board Secretary (Facsimile)
Unemployment Compensation Trust	Treasurer of School Monies (Facsimile) and Board President (Facsimile) or Board Secretary (Facsimile)
NJ Cash Management Fund	Treasurer of School Monies (Facsimile) and Board President (Facsimile) or Board Secretary (Facsimile)
Matawan Regional High School (MRHS) Athletic Activities Account	MRHS Principal or Athletic Director and Board Secretary or Assistant Board Secretary
Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Student Activities Accounts	Building Principals and Board Secretary or Assistant Board Secretary
Scholarship Account	Board Secretary or Assistant Board Secretary or Board President
Food Services Account	Board Secretary or Assistant Board Secretary or Board President

5. Approval of Depositories

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Board of Education designate the below listed Financial Institutions, Fund and Corporation as depositories for the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Board of Education funds and that the Financial Institutions be required to be insured by either the SLIC or the FDIC and/or as required by both Federal and State statutes:

Santander
Investors Bank
New Jersey Asset & Rebate Management Program
Bank of America

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board Secretary be authorized to wire transfer Board of Education funds between Board of Education accounts only; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board Secretary be authorized to enter into agreements with the State to allow the State to initiate credit entries to Board of Education accounts in its depositories by automatic deposits when appropriate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any and all endorsements on behalf of the Board of Education upon checks, drafts, notes or instruments for depositor or collection made may be written or stamped endorsements of the Board of Education without any designation of the person making such endorsements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board Secretary be authorized on behalf of the Board of Education to change existing account types and establish new Statement Savings, NOW, Special Checking and/or Money Market Investment Accounts, in any one or all of the above depositories when in the best interest of the Board of Education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any funds on deposit in Board of Education accounts be subject to withdrawal at any time upon presentation of warrants, checks, notes, bonds, bond coupons or other instruments or orders for the payment of money when signed, live or facsimile; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board Secretary is hereby authorized to deliver, upon demand, specimen facsimile signatures of required authorities to the above approved depositories; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board Secretary is hereby authorized on behalf of the Board of Education to:

- a. Withdraw from depositories and give receipt for, or authorize depositories to deliver to bearer or to any person designated by the Board Secretary, all or any documents and securities or other property held by the depositories for any purpose
- b. Authorize the depositories to purchase or sell CDs, Repurchase Agreements and other securities, and
- c. Execute and deliver all instructs required by the depositories in connection with any of the foregoing resolutions and affix thereto the seal of the Board of Education.

6. Open Public Meetings Act-Establish Meeting Dates, Time and Place

WHEREBY notice is hereby given that pursuant to the “OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW”, P.L. 1975, C.231, the Board of Education of the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District does herewith announce its schedule of Annual Meetings to be held during the period from February 8, 2021 through January 3, 2022.

A. Committee of the Whole meetings will be held on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 pm at Lloyd Road Elementary School, Aberdeen, NJ. In the event the meeting cannot be held at Lloyd Road, they will be conducted virtually.

B. Regular Action meetings will be held on the fourth Monday of each month at 6:30 pm at Lloyd Road Elementary School, Aberdeen, NJ. In the event the meeting cannot be held at Lloyd Road, they will be conducted virtually. The purpose of the meeting is to act on all agenda items and any other business to come before the Board. These meetings are designated as meetings to be recorded for broadcast on the District's YouTube channel also known as Huskievision.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that notices of meetings of the Board of Education will be posted in all schools; the Borough of Matawan; Township of Aberdeen; the Public Library and the District website.
(Finance Attachment #1)

7. Approval of Doctrine of Necessity

WHEREAS, the School Ethics Act, N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq. was enacted by the New Jersey State Legislature to ensure and preserve public confidence in school board members and school administrators and to prove specific ethical standards to guide their conduct; and

WHEREAS, questions have arisen regarding how a Board should invoke the Doctrine of Necessity when a quorum of a board of education has conflicts of interest on a matter required to be voted upon; and

WHEREAS, the School Ethics Commission has provided some guidance in Public Advisory Opinion A03-98 (April 1, 1998) but finds that there is a need to repeat and clarify its opinion; and

WHEREAS, the opinion set forth that, when it is necessary for a Board to invoke the Doctrine of Necessity, the Board should state publicly that it is doing so, the reason that such action is necessary and the specific nature of the conflicts of interest; and

WHEREAS, the opinion further provided that if the Board must invoke the Doctrine of Necessity not just to vote, but also to form a negotiations committee because it is without even three members to serve as a committee, then the Board must determine whether to act as a committee of the whole or to choose a smaller negotiations committee from among its members after stating publicly its reason for doing so as set forth above; and,

WHEREAS, in keeping with the Legislative purpose as set forth in N.J.S.A. 18A:12-22(a) the School Ethics Commission views public disclosure of conflicts of interest to be paramount when it is necessary to invoke the Doctrine of Necessity.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the School Ethics Commission hereby requires Boards of Education and Charter School Boards of Trustees that must invoke the Doctrine of Necessity to adopt a resolution setting forth that they are invoking the Doctrine, the reason for doing so and the specific nature of the conflicts of interest; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Board of Education and Charter School Boards of Trustees that invoke the Doctrine are directed to read the resolution at a regularly scheduled public meeting, post it where it posts public notices for thirty (30) days and provide the Commission with a copy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission shall distribute this Resolution to the county superintendents for distribution to the school districts and charter schools, the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey Association of

School Administrators, the New Jersey Association of School; Business Officials and the New Jersey Education Association.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS RELATING TO BOARD AGENDA ITEMS

- Ms. Friedman spoke about the contributions made by Ms. Randi Moore as a parent and Board member and provided an overview of her service and her desire to help and contribute to the community and how sorely she will be missed.

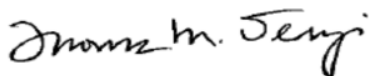
XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS RELATING TO ADDITIONAL MATTERS

- Please refer to Exhibit A which consists of emails received from the public comments which were read by Mr. Bombardier and responses were provided where appropriate by Dr. Majka.
- Tina Jimenez questioned why the district is delaying the opening of school when a surrounding district has opened their schools 5 days per week. She also questioned the impact that the closing of schools has had on the mental health of the students. Ms. Perez responded the support systems are in place in all schools for students for counseling who may have social and emotional learning issues.
- Sheetal Werneke stated that decisions regarding the opening of schools should be made on data and not on emotional issues. She pointed to recent statistics regarding the lowering of positive cases, a transmission rate of .92 and it's 10 days since the Christmas holiday and kids have acted responsibly during this period.
- Cindy Santora questioned if the district will be mandating the vaccine for teachers when it becomes available and what is the position of the union. Mr. Rubin responded that employers have a fair amount of discretion in making the vaccine mandatory; however, unions should be involved in those discussions at it relates to the terms and conditions of employment for their members.
- Cassandra Harrison commented that she supported the board decision to keep schools closed and appreciated the board's concern for the safety and well-being of the students and staff.
- Sheetal Werneke questioned if the discussions with the union regarding mandating of vaccines will be held publicly. Mr. Rubin responded that discussions regarding the terms and conditions of employment are private matters; however, the public will be informed of the outcomes of those discussions.
- Tina Jimenez felt that these meetings should not be forums for other parents to tell parents how to deal with issues involving their children. She stated that it is the board of education's responsibility to respond to mental health issues since she believed that these issues are a consequence for some students as a result of the school closings. She stated that many parents demand that schools be opened as safely as possible.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Ms. Ascoli seconded by Ms. Freidman and a unanimous roll call vote the Board adjourned the meeting at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas M. Venanzi
Interim School Business Administrator/
Board Secretary

MATAWAN-ABERDEEN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADOPTED 2021
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS SCHEDULE

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, PL 1975, the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District Board of Education at its Regular Action Meeting on January 4, 2021 adopted the following Board of Education meeting schedule. The location of the meetings will be held at Lloyd Road Elementary School, 401 Lloyd Road, Aberdeen, NJ. All meetings will begin at 6:30 pm unless otherwise indicated. In the event the meetings cannot be held at Lloyd Road, they will be conducted virtually. Action may be taken.

REGULAR ACTION/COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETINGS

MEETING DATE	LOCATION
MONDAY, February 8, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, February 22, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, March 8, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, March 22, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, April 12, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, April 26, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, May 10, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, May 24, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
SATURDAY, June 5, 2021 – 9:00 AM	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, June 14, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, June 28, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, July 26, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, August 23, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, September 13, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, September 27, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, October 11, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, October 25, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, November 8, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, November 22, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, December 20, 2021	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, January 3, 2022	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, January 10, 2022	Lloyd Road Elementary School
MONDAY, January 24, 2022	Lloyd Road Elementary School

Thomas M. Venanzi
Interim School Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Adopted: January 4, 2021

Exhibit A
Public Comments
Re-Organization Meeting
January 4, 2021

publiccomments@marsd.org

Cindy Santora

“State and local officials shut down in-person learning for the vast majority of our more than 56 million elementary and secondary school students beginning in late February and early March of this year. Since then, however, our Nation has identified effective measures to facilitate the safe resumption of in-person learning, and the Federal Government has provided more than \$13 billion to States and school districts to implement those measures.

The prolonged deprivation of in-person learning opportunities has produced undeniably dire consequences for the children of this country. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stated that school attendance is negatively correlated with a child’s risk of depression and various types of abuse. States have seen substantial declines in reports of child maltreatment while school buildings have been closed, indicating that allegations are going unreported. These reductions are driven in part by social isolation from the schoolteachers and support staff with whom students typically interact and who have an obligation to report suspected child maltreatment. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has also found that school closures have a “substantial impact on food security and physical activity for children and families.” Additionally, a recent survey of educators found student absences from school, including virtual learning, have nearly doubled during the pandemic, and as AAP has noted, chronic absenteeism is associated with alcohol and drug use, teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, and suicide attempts.

School closures are especially difficult for families with children with special needs. Schools provide not only academic supports for students with special needs, but they also provide much-needed in-person therapies and services, including physical and occupational therapies. A recent survey found that 80 percent of children with special needs are not receiving the services and supports to which they are entitled and that approximately 40 percent of children with special needs are receiving no services or supports. Moreover, the survey found that virtual learning may not be fully accessible to these students, as children with special needs are twice as likely to receive little or no remote learning and to be dissatisfied with the remote learning received.

Low-income and minority children are also disproportionately affected by school closures. In low-income zip codes, students’ math progress decreased by nearly 50 percent while school buildings were closed in the spring, and the math progress of students in middle-income zip codes fell by almost a third during the same period.

A failure to quickly resume in-person learning options is likely to have long-term economic effects on children and their families. According to a recent study, if in person classes do not fully resume until January 2021, the average student could lose \$61,000 to \$82,000 in lifetime earnings, or the equivalent of a year of full-time work. Additionally, in 2019, more than 90 percent of children under the age of 18 had at least one employed parent. Many employed parents do not have the option of engaging in remote work that allows them the flexibility to supervise their children during the day when in-person learning options are not available. Without the resumption of in-person learning opportunities, the economic and social harms resulting from such lost employment opportunities will continue to compound.

Nevertheless, virtual instruction is an inadequate substitute for in-person learning opportunities and this aid is insufficient to meet current needs.

While some families, especially those with financial means, have been able to mitigate school disruptions through in person options such as homeschooling, private schools, charter schools, and innovative models like microschools and “learning pods,” for many families, their children’s residentially assigned public school remains their only financially available option.“

The cares act is expired. Covid leave is a thing is the past. Parents can no longer expect pay to stay home with their children. As of 1/1/2021 parents will be expected to return to work, I expect my children to return to school, for full time 5 days.

If our government recognizes these failures than how can this board ignore them?? Our children need to return to 5 full days of learning.

Cindy Santora
Concerned mother

<https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2020/12/tighter-budgets-and-derailed-careers-the-coronavirus-pandemics-financial-impacts-on-women.html>

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/08/parents-juggle-work-and-child-care-during-pandemic.html?>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/29/upshot/mothers-leaving-jobs-pandemic.amp.html>

Sheetal Werneke

Good day,

I would like to ask that there is transparency in any discussions the board is having with the MAREA. In all of my recent parent/teacher conferences, I could sense the frustration of teachers who are working harder than ever on remote instruction, while having even less engagement than normal. I know most of them want to be back in classrooms as safely as possible. We support their desire to teach the way they are meant to.

Thank you,
Sheetal Werneke

Nicole Johnson

Has there been any plans put in place to maintain staff so the district can remain open if another “large quarantine” is needed again?

Nicole

Michelle Sassa

Good Evening and Happy New Year!

My children are very much looking forward to returning to in person learning next week – and I am so thrilled the Board is allowing this to happen.

I too am optimistic about all of the recent data showing that schools are safe. In light of the science, what specifically is your plan for transitioning to 5 days of in person learning, what is your timetable, and what data are you using to inform this decision?

Thank you
Michelle Sassa

Janice Reese-Berardo

Dear Board of Education,

Thank you for protecting the students, teachers, staff and administration of the district by making the call to go virtual. This decision was difficult to make but we are in difficult times. As the numbers continue to rise, please continue to keep our health and safety as a priority when making these difficult decisions.

Thank you for protecting all of us,
Janice Reese-Berardo

Dr. Gina M. Lagnese

Hello.

I am writing today in response to my daughters comments over the holiday vacation. She is a senior and she has gone between sadness & indifference about her senior year. She mentioned to me that it's sad how the seniors are not able to be together AT ALL this year. As a student who has been in this district since kindergarten, it's devastating for her not to celebrate this milestone year with her WHOLE class. Even with hybrid, the senior class should be given priority to be all together, not split up. I couldn't agree with her more.

We need these kids back in school. I am a physician & i KNOW the risks that covid poses to these kids is minimal. We need to act now before any more depression/indifference ensues. Their mental health depends on it!

Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

Dr. Gina M. Lagnese, FACFAS

Dianna Pell

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and ask questions of the Board as we go forward through this tumultuous school year. At this point, many local and regional stakeholders, as well as a number of national studies, have emphasized the necessity of in-person education. My family is looking forward eagerly to a return to the classroom, while others look to that future with fear, but emotions should not rule the decisions of the Board. What data-driven benchmarks or indicators are the Board using to make decisions about providing hybrid or full 5-day in-person education? Thank you for any information you can provide - we are all interested in moving forward using data-based approaches.

Dianna Pell

17 Idolstone Lane

Aberdeen, NJ 07747

Michele Lasko

Today I learned Holmdel School District is going back 5 half days a week. Elementary began today and high school will resume that schedule tomorrow for Holmdel.

With Matawan at approx.

3800 students

7 schools

324 faculty

And 11.8-1 student to teacher ratio

Holmdel is at approx.

3000 students

4 schools

263 faculty

11.4-1 student to teacher ratio

It appears we are similarly matched.

If they can do 5 half days in person, why can't Matawan?

Manasquan School District as well returned to 5 days a week.

While i do not agree with many of Governor Murphys opinions I do agree with the fact that students belong in school.

Our students know how to wear a mask, social distance, and have become borderline frantic in getting tested if they are near someone or were with someone who was with someone who has tested positive for Covid to help stop the spread.

The Governor has said Students are not getting sick in school. We need to do better.

You are worried about the transmission of Covid 19 in schools? ?

The districts problem is now bigger than that.

Depression, Disconnection, Lethargy, Disinterest, Apathy, Indifference, Mental Exhaustion and Covid Fatigue is rampant among the High School age Students.

Virtual Clubs? Not Working.

Virtual School? Really not working.

So what do they need? Virtual Counseling?

THEY NEED EACH OTHER and everything else that High School entails.

We are losing these kids and they are losing themselves.

Lets get them back to 5 days a week and with regular in person after school activities.

Please.

Thank you

Michele Lasko

Julie Schlegel

Dr. Majka and Board Members:

Happy New Year, and best wishes for a far calmer 2021!

I am writing to advocate that the Board and administration postpone the return to hybrid/in-person instruction, currently scheduled for next Monday, January 11 (previously January 19).

While I am excited about the prospect of my only child being able to return to the classroom, right now is not the safest time to do so. We are seeing that young people are being increasingly affected by this new strain of COVID-19. While the death rates do not (yet) appear to have increased among all populations, the transmission rates are much higher, as is the infection rate among young people. (And death, of course, is a lagging indicator.) Further, the Los Angeles school district is conducting voluntary testing of its *asymptomatic* population. Among the school-age children without symptoms who chose to get tested, they are finding 10 to 20 percent (depending on age group) are positive. And this is when their schools are not even open, and have not been since last March. Extrapolating the results if those asymptomatic yet positive students were sharing a small, poorly ventilated classroom with 10-20 other kids would be fairly horrific.

While New Jersey has thankfully been spared the loss of any school-age children to COVID thus far, school-age children are being affected. One ICU nurse friend lives in Massachusetts, and her community is seeing students as young as 5th grade in the ICU, and teenagers being intubated. (Plus, nobody knows the potential long-term impact of either COVID, or Multi-System Inflammatory Disorder in Children, on kids yet.) More importantly, schools are not merely buildings full of children. They are workplaces, staffed by large numbers of adults, many of whom are vulnerable to poor outcomes from COVID. I personally know individuals who were previously healthy, under age 50, who have died or are now “long-haulers,” with debilitating medical conditions they never had before COVID, which their doctor suspects may now be permanent. I do not want to put any of our teachers or staff at risk of such an outcome, and I don’t want our kids feeling responsible if such an outcome is brought home to their family or their teachers. Further, while we don’t yet know the long-term outcome of the damage (e.g., scarred lungs) to asymptomatic or slightly symptomatic children, doctors have found that such damage exists, even among children who never knew they were ill.

Unknowns such as these, combined with the increased virulence of the new variant(s), have caused other jurisdictions to pull back on their school reopening plans. London’s primary schools had been scheduled to reopen today, but yesterday announced they would not. Closer to home, according to Governor Murphy’s COVID press briefings on each date, the number of school districts in New Jersey that were participating in each of the various forms of learning on that date was as follows:

	Dec. 2, 2020	Dec. 21, 2020	Jan. 4, 2021
In-Person	89	82	77
Hybrid	438	362	348
Virtual	246	320	339
Combination	38	47	47

As you can see, there is a clear and continuing trend towards fewer and fewer districts being open in-person or hybrid, and more being full virtual. This only makes sense, as we have not yet even reached the anticipated post-Christmas peak in new cases/hospitalizations, let alone the post-New Year’s Eve peak. Reinstating the district’s in-person/hybrid instruction program at this time seems like a huge (and avoidable) health risk not only to students, but also to MARS D staff and the broader community.

While my son would (and does) absolutely benefit greatly from in-person instruction, and the inconveniences posed by remote learning are not insignificant, I recognize that our family is lucky to be in the situation where we can work from home, making remote schooling difficult but not impossible. I know that other families and children are not so lucky, or suffer from other individualized circumstances that render in-person instruction even more essential for their child. None of that matters, however, if we don’t have safe and healthy students and staff. The lives of those students are unlikely to be improved if they bring COVID home to a loved one.

I recognize that there is no easy decision right now, but strongly urge the Board to consider postponing the return to hybrid instruction. During his December 9, 2020 briefing, Governor Murphy shared two state models that projected the possible peak for the current “second wave.” One predicted a peak on January 13, and the other on February 5. I certainly can’t predict when that peak will be, but from the state’s numbers, we do not appear to be there yet. The original school return date of January 19 (allowing 2 weeks after New Year’s) would have made more sense, but at this point, it may be more prudent to take a case rate/positivity approach (e.g., today’s percent positivity rate was 11.22%; maybe return to hybrid once that rate drops below X% for a certain number of days?). Alternatively, delaying a return until all teachers and staff who choose to do so can be vaccinated would minimize the risk to the entire school community, their families, and the surrounding towns.

While it is true that parents can choose full virtual, teachers and staff do not have that option if the hybrid model is operational. Further, switching from hybrid to virtual now would require a student to change classes, and teachers, mid-year. To protect our students and our staff, given the rising case numbers and the uncertainties associated with the new variant(s), I strongly urge that the district’s planned return to hybrid instruction be postponed until we ensure we are past the post-holidays surge, and are able to get the majority of our teachers and staff vaccinated.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Julie Schlegel
Aberdeen, NJ

Received at 5:45PM

Liz Frimere

Dear Board Members,

Rather than reiterate the obvious physical and emotional reasons of how our children are suffering from forceful remote-learning, please respond to all district parents in detail as to why the MARSD schools shut down without warning, and the scientific data used by the Board to enforce such draconian measures.

An explanation is very much overdue.

Thank you.