
Back to school decision

Jason Vanderwall <jvanderwall@mcpsmt.org>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 9:48 AM

Dear Board, It saddens my heart to hear that you have chosen to go back to normal school conditions based on the current Covid conditions where there is an incredible uptick in cases as well as cases in the school. As I gathered with my colleagues this morning we were all shocked by the decision. I have not yet found one person in our school who feels like it is the right thing to do. We are the frontline workers who are put out there everyday and have the most to risk. It is your employees that you show disregard for in this decision. With three kids of my own I know the hardships but as we all have I have adapted for the safety of others. With experts predicting even more of a rise this fall I would hope that you reconsider this decision and look at it from a health standpoint instead of a PR move. This is a poor decision by people who are not at all asked to be there on the front lines and not taking into effect the safety of staff and kids. God forbid someone dies or becomes terribly sick. Please reconsider your stance just come to any of the schools and get a pulse for what are feeling. You have disregarded this and this will have many consequences down the road.

Jason Vanderwall

Nov. 9 return

Raymond Kingfisher <rdkingfisher@mcpsmt.org>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 10:46 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Good Morning Board Members,

As an employee of MCPS I am opposed to having the students return to full in person learning. I am taking this stance on behalf of the Native American families with underlying conditions here in Missoula. We shut down before we had any positive cases and now we are opening up on the climb of a spike. Flu and cold season are here, how do we distinguish what illness is present.

What is the plan when we have multiple cases in different schools? What is the capacity of our hospitals, pediatric care? What do families do when the schools shut down and the family is sick? Do we leave them to fend for themselves?

NA makes up 2.7% (USC) of the population here in Missoula County. I know of 15 families that have been affected by Covid and more daily. The Montana Indian Reservations are starting to overtake the bigger city numbers in positive cases (per capita). The people have begun to flee to bigger towns near their locations, Missoula, Billings and Greatfalls, for better healthcare, putting multiple families in single housing units. Fleeing like the people from California, Arizona, Texas, Utah did. We have many Grandparents (at-risk) raising their grandchildren who are students in MCPS. What do we do with the students when the guardians get sick and pass away?

MCPS employees are already giving the ultimate sacrifice, they are willing to sacrifice their lives, getting sick and possible death, for the education of these children. The recovery numbers are fairly good, yet the strongest nation in the world has 201,000 deaths in six months, there is something wrong there.

I have listed some of the questions I have for the plan to return full time on Nov. 9. There are many more. Employees are human as well and are susceptible to the many things Covid has brought, anxiety, depression, fear, etc. Do we have health services for us? Are those in person or online? We do have insurance but, who pays the mounting bills for these attributed illnesses due to Covid? (More stress) 10 Month employees cannot afford them. I can tell you that.

My solution would be to change the school year, March to September. That would allow us to combat Covid and Flu separately. Sacrifice the summer, not lives. For all the other stuff, I guess it is survival. I wish you all good health and wellness. Thank you, have a good day.

Raymond D. Kingfisher

Raymond D. Kingfisher, BA
Native American Specialist
728-2400 x1047
rdkingfisher@mcps.k12.mt.us
Administration Building, B2
215 South 6th St. West
Missoula, MT 59801

"Give thanks for unknown blessings already on their way." - old indian saying

MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Covid19 return to school

Kerry Hunt <klhunt@mcpsmt.org>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 11:15 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear Board Members,

I can understand your intent to return to full time status. Yet for this action to take place this fall does not appear to be a sound decision. All spring and summer many people have made the sacrifices to bring the pandemic under control. Now as we are in the fall and moving towards winter it seems counter intuitive. We know that as groups get larger infections increase. Montana is now experiencing an increase in infections. There are three contributing factors. Opening schools, large social gatherings, and not adhering to protocols described by Doctors. The 1918 spanish flu had 195,00 deaths in a month when people were gathered in large groups. Thank you for your careful consideration.

Kerry Hunt

" Adopt the pace of nature; her secret is patience." Ralph Waldo Emerson



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

School opening phase 2

Suzanne Demarinis <dsuzluk@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 11:21 AM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Dear MCPS board committee,

I am extremely concerned about opening schools into phase 2 all kids 5 days per week.

I believe opening this way is too much of a risk especially in cold and flu season. According to Dr. Fauci we should be careful and hunker down. It seems reckless to go against this.

Children can have covid, spread it without having any symptoms themselves. This puts teachers, Para's, school staff and families at risk. COVID cases are averaging in Montana at 216 cases daily.

What is the reasoning behind opening up full boar by November? Please e plain how this will be safe? Physical safety should be paramount to the boredom or temporary difficulties of online learning. I've included some links from pandemic expert Dr. Fauci

Dear MCPS,

Sorry I accidentally sent my last e-mail without providing the links for you. Here they are:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/fauci-says-u-s-needs-hunker-down-fall-winter-n1239798>

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/11/health/children-coronavirus-transmission-wellness/index.html>

Thank you,

Suzanne DeMarinis

[Quoted text hidden]

reopening

Josephine Wright <jawright@mcpsmt.org>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 12:51 PM

I work for MCPS and have children in 2 MCPS schools. I am very disappointed by the district's plan to move forward with phase 2 and 3 reopening. We shut down in March when we had ZERO cases of Covid19 in Missoula. Now we have increasing numbers including cases at SHS and BHS and we think this is the time to add more exposure? Students, staff and parents will be exposed. Students, staff and parents will get sick. Students, staff and parents will die. I would rather deal with the frustration of continued hybrid/remote learning and isolation than the frustration of my child or family member being hospitalized or worse. MCPS should continue with the great response we had in the beginning of this crisis, not fall short now. I get parents are frustrated and struggling with childcare and trying to help kids with remote learning but that is not worth the risk of losing students and their families and our staff to a preventable death or long term illness. MCPS can do better and should do better than to rush forward now.



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Please Reverse Your Decision

Kaitlin Pearsall <kaitlinmariehaynes@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 1:07 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Trustees,

I urge you to please reverse your decision to approve Dr. Watson's reopening plan. I am incredibly disheartened by your vote given the overwhelming public comment in the opposition. As an MCPS employee, I fear for the students' health as well as my own. I am opposed to this decision and implore you to reconsider.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Kaitlin Haynes



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Please protect our Missoula County Public School students and teachers

Doris A Meek <dameek@fifthstreet.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 1:37 PM

Our Montana COVID 19 cases have been increasing with greater numbers than ever before. Sending children back to school will only increase these numbers since children will be less likely to stay safe, therefore bringing a higher possibility of passing the infection on to other family members or the total population. Schools in the surrounding areas that have opened to all students are seeing many more cases than MCPS even though they have a smaller population. What actions have been taken to insure social distancing as well as other things to keep both our children and teachers safe?

It is my understanding that the current hybrid schedule has been working well. I know that it has been troublesome coming up to speed on this process, but I understand that most of those problems have been worked out. Can you tell me why it is felt that is not true?

PRIOR to sending these innocent children back to school, are you upgrading ALL classroom to include a sink? Are you adding extra bathroom facilities and adding employees to monitor children using the facilities as well as cleaning the facilities after each use?

Will ALL children and teachers be REQUIRED to wear a mask over both their mouth and nose at all times? Who will be responsible to making sure this is done at ALL times? What would happen if a child or a teacher was not in compliance with these rules? I ask this because our Governor has said that we should all wear masks in public but there are many people who do not, and nothing is done about it. Will the state of Montana supply ALL persons who need to be on school property with PPEs? If a child or a teacher has a "medical" excuse for not wearing a mask, will that person be required to stay off the premises? Their medical needs should not endanger innocent people.

I have recently had experience with the testing options here in Montana. Although my husband and I were able to get tested, the person I had contact with, that had contact with somebody who tested positive the day after she spent time with her, said she was told that not only did she not need to be tested, she could fly on a commercial airplane without being tested with a week after the contact. This just shows that either people are just not wanting to be tested where it may conflict with their personal plans or beliefs which may be reflected in major under reporting of actual cases.

Please help protect our children as well as the teachers who work so hard to help them secure a bright future.

Doris A. Meek



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Re: Full school opening "Phase 2"

N. N. <nnaiden@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org
Cc: dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 10:05 PM

To the Trustees and Superintendent of MCPS

Regarding Phase 2, decreased distancing, inadequate safeguards

I want to write to strongly object to creating an educational situation in which kids and teachers are unable to do social distancing. Social distancing is the one thing that has consistently been known to be effective at reducing vector spread of viruses.

While the opinions of masks have changed repeatedly the research on distancing is crystal clear.

The actual distance that insures safety is not 6 feet, it's about 23 feet between individuals. See the links below for summary articles in plain language on the research. New York is way ahead of the rest of the US on Covid19 at this point, and they are being pro-active, not reactive, about prevention.

That's because they had refrigerated vans as morgues in the street.

What is happening now, as the government utterly fails to address this pandemic, is we are collectively becoming habituated to the situation, 200,000 deaths is mind numbing. The lack of change - because we have not been willing to sacrifice the economy for human life - makes people tired. That does not make it okay to risk children, families, teachers, staff and in general the entire Missoula Community to the escalated risk of full time school

School opens, case numbers go up. Cases go up, people die.

As a 25 year veteran employee of the Montana Public Schools, and now a brain and behavioral health specialist in private practice I can tell you this is a terrible idea. I get the pressure for schools to open, I know it well from watching it year after year in my former career.

There is no justification for what you are planning to do. When the first kid gets a lung transplant, or dies, or has chronic heart disease from Covid, they can thank you for your focus on opening. When the parents get sick, and their coworkers get sick, and who knows who else gets sick....it will trace back to a full school at MCPS that can't do distancing.

Distancing works. You can wash your hands all you want but it will not decrease your exposure to what just came out of someone else's nose. Kids hands are all over the outsides of their masks constantly - they can wear masks but if they touch them (and they WILL touch them) all bets are off.

I treat PTSD, anxiety, autism and developmental disabilities and this decision provides a lot of job security. I'd rather **not** have my practice triple in size because school administration can't be creative enough to go against tradition when we are facing an extraordinary communicable disease. You'll have no teachers left if you expose them like this, and while schools are for kids schools can't exist without teachers. For Pete's sake, get a grip.

Don't do this. Just don't.

Noelle Naiden
Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor
School Psychologist/School Counselor
200 N. Adams Street Room 301
Missoula Montana 59802
406-640-3984

nnaidenlcpc@gmail.com



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Concern with decision to move to hybrid plus model and full time

Dessa Dale <mtdales@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 9:47 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Dear Board of Trustees,

I was very disappointed and concerned that the decision to move to hybrid plus model and then to full time was approved. I am glad my kids (elementary and middle school) are back in school, and yes, we both work full time and are tapped out balancing both school and more than full-time work. Would it be easier to have them back fulltime? Yes. However, we were hoping for a commitment to the hybrid model for the rest of the semester so that we could plan better, keep class sizes smaller, and to have some sort of mitigation from risk while cases are on a rapid rise. I strongly urge you all to reconsider and keep us in the hybrid model until at least until the end of the semester.

Sincerely,

Dessa Dale

Sent from Mail for Windows 10



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Regarding a 11/9/2020 Return

Carleen <clch4@aol.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 6:10 PM

Reply-To: Carleen <clch4@aol.com>

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Good evening MCPS Board of Trustees,

I sincerely hope you are all healthy and safe. I wish I could say the same for **all** of the employees and students in MCPS.

In reading the Missoulian article on 9/23/2020 in which it states *"After extensive discussion and public comment at a board meeting Tuesday night, Missoula County Public School trustees approved a schedule that has all students returning to in-person classes five days a week on Nov. 9."*

I am sorely disappointed in this decision. Though I fully recognize that November 9 is about 6 weeks away I believe it is the wrong decision.

If we Missoulians want to help get our state out of the "RED" we need to be more prudent, we need to maintain our distance, we need to help flatten the curve and in order to do that we **MUST NOT RETURN TO SCHOOL** in full at least until the same time the MOA returns after the first two semesters are completed, January 21, 2021.

The City/County Health Department determines who is a 'close contact' when it comes to cases within our schools. What is scary is that their decisions impact dozens more people than they choose to contact. We have Paras and Teachers in classrooms, in Center Based Programs fully engaged in person with kids. In rooms with no windows, for hours per day. We have custodians who are ALL OVER buildings, in classrooms, bathrooms, hallways, etc. Anyone in a building is at risk.

I invite you, I encourage you, I implore you to come to any building, for a full day or maybe two or three and shadow Paras, Teachers, Secretaries, Custodians, Clerical office staff workers, Food Service personnel, anyone working in a building. How safe would you feel being in these quarters with the *limited* number of kids we have in-building in our hybrid phase? How will that feel when our hallways are **crammed with** kids, kids who may/may not choose to wear masks all day long? How do we contact trace when there are no cohort groups? How do we stay safely socially distant to protect ourselves? To protect each other?

The answer is...we DON'T. We just add to the growing problem of "COVID Fatigue", add to the

apathy of 'I'm so over this, let's just go back to normal'. We cannot go back to 'normal' because normal no longer exists. We cannot relax our standards, we cannot relax our precarious grip on keeping our students and staff safe by sending everyone back to work, to school full time.

It has already been reported that MCPS is lacking in sufficient staffing now because we have folks working remotely who are doing so for a reason: their health and safety. Folks who have gone so far as to take a leave of absence due to their health & safety concerns. I believe those folks will not just suddenly feel safe enough to return to work. How will you account for full classes without enough teachers and paras, food service workers to feed them, custodial staff to keep our buildings disinfected - when they're already understaffed and overloaded?

Are you really willing to send students and staff back at full capacity knowing full well that COVID is not gone NOR IS IT SLOWING DOWN? As with ANY data, COVID data can be skewed to anyone's reporting advantage. But the reality is, with or without numbers, it is not **gone** and we are not near a vaccine and we continue to have cases and those cases WILL increase when contact increases.

Please do NOT be part of Montana's problem, the nation's problem by sending us back to full-time school this early in the school year. We are equipped to work in the manner in which we are doing now. We have people adapting and adjusting to provide the best education possible.

It is not promoting doomsday to state that this IS a crisis, it will continue to *be* a crisis as long as people continue to ignore regulations, as long as people ignore social distance guidelines and as long as we start sending students and staff back to school buildings FAR TOO SOON.

If you feel the MOA is doing it's job and can continue to do so through Jan 21, then why can't WE who are in person, continue to do what we are doing?

This is not panic talking, this is reality. Make a plan for us to stay in Remote Hybrid learning, all of us, until the second semester. Give our town, give our schools, give our students and staff time to flatten that curve. Give us time to feel safe!

The lasting effects of COVID19 on the body are horrendous. The expense of dealing with it can be catastrophic. The mental/emotional effects of it are life changing.

Give us a chance to be part of the solution, NOT put us in a position to exacerbate the problem.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Carleen L. Hathaway

9/24/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - Regarding a 11/9/2020 Return

MMCEO Secretary-Treasurer
CS Porter Para Educator

Reasoning for the Return to a Full Time Schedule

Jessica Shontz <jessshontz@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 5:45 PM

Reply-To: jess.shontz@gmail.com

To: javgeris@mcpsmt.org, gdecker@mcpsmt.org, meholland@mcpsmt.org, dllorenzen@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org, ssterbis@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org

Cc: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

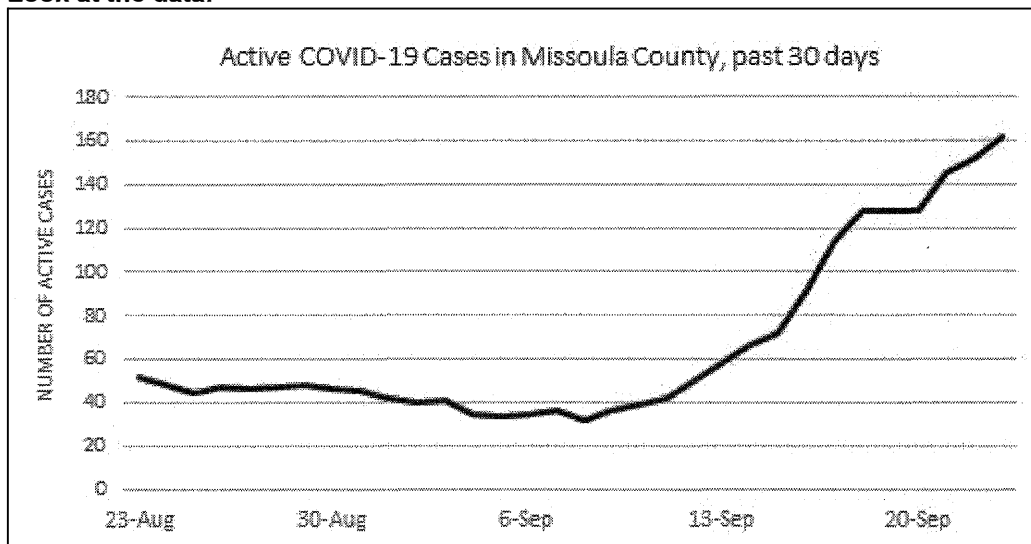
To the members of the Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees:

Your decision to return to full time, in-person learning despite increased numbers of people infected with COVID-19 in Missoula County is not just baffling, it's insane and negligent.

How do you justify the increased risk to our children and their teachers? You know that cases are increasing. You know that physical distancing is not possible. You know that despite teachers' best intentions and efforts, students will not wear their masks all the time.

I work a full-time job, as does my husband. We are not unfamiliar with the struggles of helping a student learn remotely when we cannot be home during the day. We allowed our child to attend school with the hybrid schedule because we were assured that the board would follow the data closely before making any decisions about a return to the full-time schedule.

Look at the data:



Explain yourselves.

I work at the University of Montana, and am deeply, painfully aware of how much work goes into keeping students safe. We are facing anger, backlash, and extreme budget deficits, and we still made the difficult decision to keep the number of in-person classes as low as possible. It's the only way to protect our students, staff, and faculty.

I am angry. I want actual answers as to how you arrived at this decision.

I send my sincere thanks to Wilena Old Person and Grace Decker for trying to protect my child.

I await your response,
Jessica Shontz

MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

vote to open schools - abysmal

ben weiss <ben.a.weiss@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 5:04 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello MCPS school board,

I was shocked and dismayed to see that you voted to reopen schools the same date local media has shown a spike in Covid cases in Missoula, especially among young people. Please reconsider your positions and take the health, safety, and welfare of our community seriously. Thank you,

WAW

Ben

Opposition to Recent Decision to Increase In-Person Instruction

Stephanie Meek <stephanie.m.meek@outlook.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 5:00 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, "javgeris@mcpsmt.org" <javgeris@mcpsmt.org>, "meholland@mcpsmt.org" <meholland@mcpsmt.org>, "dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org" <dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org>, "vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org" <vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org>, "kmercerc@mcpsmt.org" <kmercerc@mcpsmt.org>, "ssterbis@mcpsmt.org" <ssterbis@mcpsmt.org>, "jvogel@mcpsmt.org" <jvogel@mcpsmt.org>, "awake@mcpsmt.org" <awake@mcpsmt.org>

Cc: "gdecker@mcpsmt.org" <gdecker@mcpsmt.org>, "woldperson@mcpsmt.org" <woldperson@mcpsmt.org>

Hello,

I am recently been notified by a close friend of mine who is an educator within the Missoula County School system that there was a recent vote that has resulted in a decision to resume in-person instruction more regularly despite rapidly rising rates of SARS-CoV-2 infected persons in the area. I am writing to voice my incredible opposition to this plan, as someone with a vested interest in the well-being of this particular instructor along with all the other instructors, students, and their families who will be put at risk by this decision.

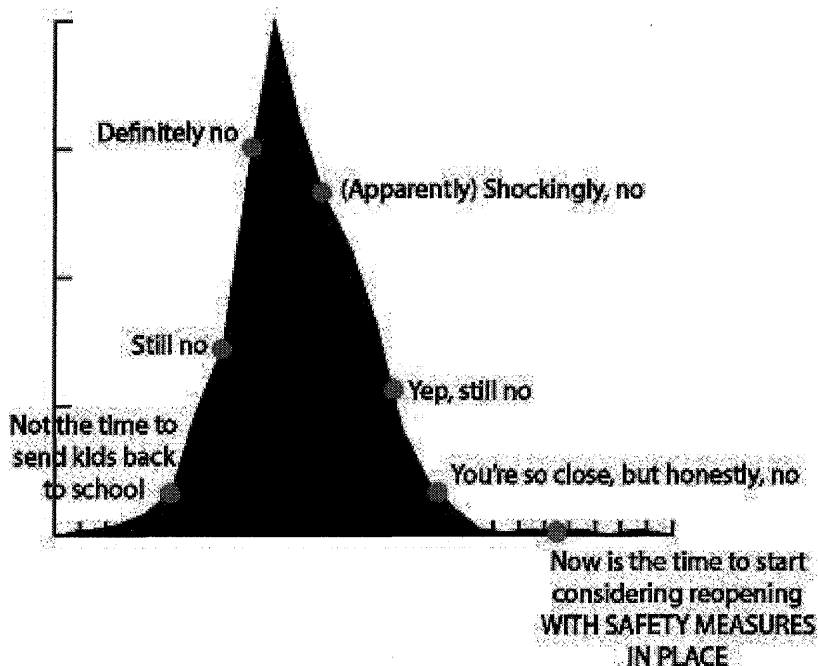
There are a number of reasons why the current plan is unsafe, unwise, and should be reconsidered. First, cases are rising within Montana, especially in the Missoula area and re-opening schools to greater in-person instruction will only add to that increase. Due to inadequate testing capabilities and poor contact tracing, there is no way to appropriately respond to the public health crisis that will only be made worse from bringing students back to the classroom. While the transition to remote learning was challenging globally at first while educators, students, and parents all adjusted, at this point the hybrid model developed has been shown to be effective. On remote learning days, I am informed, not only are students receiving education as they would in the classroom, their physical and mental well-being are also being cared for as they would be if they were in the classroom full time. While it is hard to sacrifice the social aspect of being in a classroom with friends, fortunately children of the current generation are tech-savvy enough to be able to supplement that in a number of ways. And, honestly, in a pandemic, something that is affecting the lives of millions of people around the globe, a sacrifice in one's social life is a minimal (and temporary) inconvenience that can result in the prevention of incalculable deaths.

Say that the above is not a good enough argument for you. The CDC and other health and scientific agencies all agree that wearing masks AND maintaining a distance of AT LEAST 6 feet from other individuals, along with regular hand washing of at least 20 seconds, is the best way to prevent the spread of the virus. Can you guarantee that all students and faculty will be wearing masks at all times? Can you guarantee that hand washing facilities will be readily available to everyone on your campuses? Can you guarantee that distances of 6 feet are able to be maintained? If the answer to any of those questions is no, then you are not ready to resume in-person instruction of large groups of students, it is as simple as that. I have been notified that staff at the schools will not be provided with PPE without a doctor's note which is simply gross negligence on the part of the school board. Everyone is susceptible to this virus and anyone can succumb to the effects of COVID-19. A doctor's note should not be required to be provided with the basic materials to try to keep oneself safe in an environment that your board is trying to force these educators back into against their wishes.

Nationally we are seeing trends where school re-openings are resulting in spikes in cases and, often, re-closures. I would argue that, while some parents may be pushing for re-opening for the sake of not having to balance working from home while also making sure their children are being educated, but increases class sizes in-person now will only result in a temporary reprieve for those parents, with an increased chance of them becoming sick. I would also pose the following question: to appease parents and students who may want to return to a sense of normalcy is it appropriate to force the individuals who opted for a low-paying profession of 'educator,' which they did for the love of teaching and improving the lives of others, into a situation where they must either quit their job or risk their lives? Because, regardless of what you may

personally believe, they will be risking their lives. They are currently risking their lives with smaller class sizes. While you meet on Zoom to make decisions for their future.

I have taken a moment to provide a small graphic for appropriate times to re-open, as the wealth of information that shows what has and hasn't worked globally was certainly not enough to guide your board into making the correct decision:



I would like to thank Trustee's Decker and Old Person for their opposition in this matter and hope that the rest of the board will consider a reversal of this decision for the safety and well-being of all directly and indirectly involved.

Please consider amending or simply reversing the present decision until the time is right and you can do so safely with the best interest of ALL (educators, administration, students, parents, families, the community as a whole), starting with their health,

Stephanie Meek, PhD (Microbiology & Immunology)



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Phase 2 transition schedule

Nick Shontz <nickshontz@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 4:19 PM

To: javgeris@mcpsmt.org, meholland@mcpsmt.org, dllorenzen@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, ssterbis@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello-

This letter is in response to this Missoulian article: https://missoulian.com/news/local/trustees-all-students-in-school-daily-by-nov-9/article_5d676e8a-1eb7-5300-a678-7f7026c16a1f.html#tracking-source=home-top-story-1

As cases worsen in Missoula, how can you justify moving into a more lenient phase?

As cases worsen in Missoula, how can it make sense to create an environment where "it will not be possible to maintain 6-ft of physical distancing in our classrooms"?

Things are getting worse, not better.

Things are getting worse.

Not better.

We need to act accordingly. You need to act accordingly.

Nick

**MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

C-19 question What criterial are used to move between reopening phases?

Dean McCollom <dmccollom@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 4:18 PM

To: javgeris@mcpsmt.org, meholland@mcpsmt.org, dllorenzen@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org,
kmercer@mcpsmt.org, ssterbis@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

What metrics, criteria values are used to decide to change phases of "return to classroom education"?

Dean McCollom
Cell 406-214-9802

PS:

The e-mails Info@mcpsmt.org, Superintendent@mcpsmt.org do not seem to exist. I placed a call to the main number and have not received a return call. Maybe have a better how to contact on the web site.

9/24/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - voting to go back to regular class schedule from a remote meeting while missoula cases surge

**MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

voting to go back to regular class schedule from a remote meeting while missoula cases surge

Christopher Brinsko <cmbrinsko@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 2:51 PM

shame on yall. absolutely. shameful

**MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

New COVID cases record broken SEVERAL times last week

Christopher Brinsko <cmbrinsko@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 2:50 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

plastic dividers don't change the fact that we're spending several hours a day in the same room with 20+ people

we cancelled in march, but now it's just fine that we have to go to work each day with anxiety

i'd say see you at the next meeting, but i know you don't think putting the health of you, your family, or your savings when you have to take off work because you're sick is something yall have to do



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Phase 2 transition schedule

Nick Shontz <nickshontz@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 4:19 PM

To: javgeris@mcpsmt.org, meholland@mcpsmt.org, dllorenzen@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, ssterbis@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello-

This letter is in response to this Missoulain article: https://missoulain.com/news/local/trustees-all-students-in-school-daily-by-nov-9/article_5d676e8a-1eb7-5300-a678-7f7026c16a1f.html#tracking-source=home-top-story-1

As cases worsen in Missoula, how can you justify moving into a more lenient phase?

As cases worsen in Missoula, how can it make sense to create an environment where "it will not be possible to maintain 6-ft of physical distancing in our classrooms"?

Things are getting worse, not better.

Things are getting worse.

Not better.

We need to act accordingly. You need to act accordingly.

Nick

**Public Comment** <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Return to school

Whitney Guthrie <jamesandwhitney2@gmail.com>

Thu, Sep 24, 2020 at 1:26 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

To MCPS Board of Trustees-

For the last six months I have put my life and the lives of my coworkers, friends and family in the hands of MCPS administration and the board of trustees. I trusted you when you told us we would monitor the Covid- 19 statistics and when numbers proved to be problematic we would go 100% remote. That information is the only thing that made starting back in the building acceptable in August.

Not only are our numbers increasing alarmingly fast but now Montana is in the "Red" zone classified by the White House.

I am extremely disappointed and frustrated in your recent decision to open schools to ALL students. As an educator in the building with students I can tell you things are manageable. They are manageable because of the smaller class sizes, manageable because behaviors are down and manageable because we can enforce Covid- 19 sanitation protocols.

Teachers and staff are exhausted both mentally and physically. We are stretched to almost breaking. This is not an ideal situation but no part of Covid-19 has been ideal. If you were hesitant to vote for going back every student every day your reasoning can NOT be because online learning isn't working. Online learning can be fixed, altered or modified. A simple conversation about what is working and what isn't can fix your frustrations. Open up communication about the online issues and have them resolved.

The cost of a bad or premature decision to open school is going to be the loss of people's lives. If you rush this decision and force schools to reopen 100% to students before our numbers have declined is irresponsible and dangerous. You are putting each one of us in a very high risk situation. This virus is life altering and possibly life ending. Are you willing to risk our lives because online learning isn't ideal for some?

This is a very tough time for everyone in Missoula and the nation. Your educators are asking/ begging to reconsider the return to school for every student every day. Please don't risk my life and the lives of my coworkers because you don't like online learning. It may take longer then we would want but let's wait and see what happens during flu season. Let's wait and see what happens with our Covid numbers.

If the plan does move forward you will be showing MCPS staff that parents having to deal with some online learning struggles is more important then our lives. You can fix the online learning issues with communication. You can't fix the life long effects of Covid-19. Please reconsider your decision to reopen school to every student every day.

Thanks for your time-
Whitney Guthrie

Get Outlook for iOS



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Covid-19 and Schools

Elizabeth <liza.fullerton@gmail.com>

Thu, Sep 24, 2020 at 2:18 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear Board Members,

I am writing today to express my opposition to all students returning to school on November 9th. This decision overlooks the seriousness of Covid-19, the disease which over 200,000 Americans have died from. Please look at that number again. This number does not include those who are currently hospitalized, those who have recovered, and those who are carrying and silently transmitting the virus.

We tend to forget the numbers in our desire to return to normalcy, but the numbers are increasing because cities and towns across the country are tired of taking precautions. Now is not the time to give in because of virus-fatigue, especially since many people have thrown caution to the wind. This is where your leadership comes in - where you actually consider the scenarios: Your decision for all children to be back at school will put students', families', and staff's health, and potentially lives, at risk.

I realize that there is incredible pressure from parents in the community for children to be back at school. But right now, schools have a schedule that is making safety a priority. Moreover, the numbers that you have for current in-school students are not accurate: every single day there are students, who had opted to be online, come back to in-person school. Principals, teachers, and other staff are doing everything they can to safely do their jobs - teaching and nurturing our community's children. Your decision, however, will make it harder. Having every student every day is a slap in the face to all the teachers and families in this community who prioritize safety.

Since the City/County Health Department is in control of contact tracing (and frankly, they could do better) and MCPS has no control over who is notified for exposure and risks, every student every day presents a very serious issue to our entire community. We all know how quickly colds and the flu pass through our schools.

Thank you for your time in reading this email. Please carefully consider the consequences of your decision. And then consider making safety the first priority by pushing back the date for every student every day. The safety of our whole community comes down to you.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Fullerton



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Missoula Schools re-opening plan

Linda Wallon <lindacwallon@gmail.com>

Thu, Sep 24, 2020 at 4:01 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello,

It has come to my attention that the school board has voted to approve the superintendent's plan for all students to return to school 4 days a week beginning October 12, 2020 and then 5 days a week on November 3rd. I have been closely following the number of active Covid-19 cases in Montana and they have been steadily increasing in both the state and the county. Today, there are 333 new cases statewide, 46 in Missoula. (These numbers are considered to be falsely low due to the limited testing capacity in Montana.) The danger of community transmission increases as the active cases increase and, with the approved model, social distancing will not be possible (even with 1/2 of the students on campus, the safe distance is often violated.) In a classroom with 20 students, staff will not be able to maintain a 6 foot distance- in fact, a 3 foot distance will likely not even be possible. Not only is there a high likelihood of transmission between students, but also an unacceptable risk of transmission to staff. Other nearby school districts that have fully opened are experiencing a surge in cases.

Additional items of note:

Most classrooms do not have sinks for hand washing, and restrooms are shared with over 60 other students. Some studies have implicated shared restrooms in increased risk of transmission.

The staff are not being provided with proper PPE unless they provide a physician's letter - this is completely unacceptable.

Students are learning effectively under the current hybrid model which also accommodates for mental health and nutrition services. Why increase risk when the current model is working?

According to the Missoulian, your board meeting was safely held via Zoom... clearly, the board members are aware of the risks of meeting in person. I strongly urge you to reconsider and extend the same safety considerations to your students and staff members.

Regards,
Linda Wallon Haynes



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

School openings and ventilation systems.

Jennifer Grady <patternrafter@gmail.com>

Thu, Sep 24, 2020 at 4:16 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello,

I'm a community member without school aged children. I've been paying attention to the struggles my friends and neighbors have been navigating, and I must say, I'm not jealous of them or anyone on the board. There's no doubt we're all struggling to some extent - though some more than others and for a full range of reasons. I was wondering if the board has devised a plan to assess the school buildings individually, and retrofit older or underperforming ventilation systems with filters that can help remove pathogens from lingering air in classrooms, bathrooms, offices, etc. We may not have all the info yet on the extent of aerosolized transmission, but we know that exposure time is a factor. We know ventilation plays a role. There's a ton of variables I'm sure you know much more about than I. I'm confident that the board wants to make safety of students and staff a priority, and if there's not yet an assessment plan in place, I do hope you'll consider adding it to what I'm sure is already a long to do list. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Grady

Covid and School, what a student sees

Lucas Lassila <22lasluc@student.mcpsmt.org>

Thu, Sep 24, 2020 at 10:10 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

To Superintendent Watson, and The Board of Trustees

I have read in the paper that MCPS is planning to resume to normal 5 day a week schooling by November.

I have listened to the Missoula City/County COVID-19 briefings on youtube, and have been reading the Missoulian. Both have reported on multiple accounts that COVID cases have been exponentially climbing since school and the UM opened. I am certain that the relaxing of the public on health guidelines has also played a part in the increase of cases.

As a Junior at Hellgate High-school and as someone who worked in a local retail store all summer, allow me to offer a reality check.

First I will start with the public in general:

Having worked all summer, in addition to my normal work duties, I was put on the front line to ensure that customers followed the social distancing and mask rules. Less than a third of customers entered the store with a mask on and kept it on the whole time they were being helped. Even less followed social distance guidelines without any reminders from myself and my coworkers. If one spends anytime in a grocery, hardware, or any other large shopping center, they will see countless people who show a total disregard to any of the rules set in place to keep people from getting sick. Like it or not; people have relaxed and so has enforcement, restaurants and the like are open, and people are contracting COVID.

Now to School:

The very first day of school this year, I heard numerous teachers and students express fear and anxiety about returning to school during an ONGOING PANDEMIC. Students and teachers complained all day long about wearing masks. As someone who regularly spent over 5 hours in a mask for work, It pains me to hear people complain about wearing one for two hours at a time. I would ask anyone who thinks it is a good idea to return to normal school to wear a face-mask for a 7 hour period with only 45 minuets of break during lunch. It will drive someone mad.

It is very important that you know the true sense of what is going on, as your decisions effect thousands of people. Missoula has the third highest case count in Montana, and as of 9/18/20 there are nearly 500 cases associated with schools in Montana.

Here is why:

- Even with less than 10 students in each class, a proper 6 foot social distance cannot be maintained. Students are sharing tables and sitting in desks very close (less than 3ft) to each other for hours at a time.
- Students and teachers alike are incapable of adhering to proper mask protocol; constant touching of the outside of mask (which is to be considered contaminated per health professionals), removal of masks to talk to each other, entering the building without masks on, removing masks in class to cough or sneeze, removal of masks in the bathroom, the list is endless.
- Staff including the Principals, office workers, and school safety officers can be frequently seen without face masks on or talking in close groups, both inside and outside the school. I understand that the risk is low if they are in separate rooms or outside, but regardless, they are the leaders of the school and should show the gold standard of COVID-19 precautions. If they can't do it right themselves, how can they expect students to do it right?
- During lunch and before or after school, students are in tight social circles, frequently without face masks on. Crowds to enter and exit the building, social groups talking outside main exits without masks on are always there.
- Lunchtime is quite frankly a joke; with 9th and 10th graders required to stay on campus, there are many crowds both inside and outside. Because a person cannot eat while wearing a face mask, 99% of students are mask-less. Social groups inside on the lunch tables frequently have no distance between 2 people, people often face other people on opposite sides of the tables. One can only imagine what it will be like when the weather is colder and all students are forced inside for lunch.
- Lunchtime for 11th and 12th graders is only slightly better, while most students in this grade have cars to eat in, many friend groups chose to eat together in their cars, which is impossible to social distance in, and again without masks.
- This is by all means not a complete list; sports teams sharing buses, parties, and extracurricular activities provide many other issues that need to be addressed.

I do not write this email to snitch on my fellow students and the school staff, and I also understand that people are not perfect, I know that I am not perfect in my health and safety practices. Perfect safety practices by every person is what is needed to end this pandemic. And it is frankly impossible for every student, every teacher, every staff member to be perfect in wearing masks, cleaning hands, social distance and the like. And to ask that they do 7 hours a day, 5 days a week is absolutely way too much to ask. It is very difficult even for 4 hours a day, 2 days a week.

I write this email to offer a look into what is actually happening in reality, every day at school. The decisions need to be based on reality, not old data, and not on theories.

I understand that the loss of education is a great expense, but we must prioritize health. School can be made up but lives can't be brought back. And if this pandemic continues for longer than it had too because we were all too impatient, the loss of education and life will be greater than if we had been more cautious early on.

We closed school in spring with very few cases, and now we are planning to fully reopen school in two months with 162 active cases and rising in Missoula County. To me this seems idiotic.

9/25/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - Covid and School, what a student sees

Take a look around, Coronavirus is not going away soon. So do your part to keep not only students like myself and our valuable school staff members safe and healthy, but to also to keep the general public safe. It is the right thing to do.

If cases are rising now, imagine what it will be like with the return to normal school, because I would prefer not to imagine that scenario.

I advise that you choose wisely, for history will remember the few that made decisions for the many.

Very Sincerely,
LL

•

of 16 pages



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

MCPS - Return to in-person learning

Alex Pearsall <rebelpacket@rebelpacket.net>

Fri, Sep 25, 2020 at 9:38 AM

To: javgeris@mcpsmt.org, meholland@mcpsmt.org, dllorenzen@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, ssterbis@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, gdecker@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org
Cc: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello neighbors, Montanans, and MCPS Board,

I'm normally not the type to write in or criticize another's actions like this; I honestly believe the best work gets done when you trust folks close to it to get it done right. What do I know about running a school? The square root of Jack and Schmidt. I've been pretty impressed with MCPS has been handling this pandemic so far.

This most recent decision to move fully to in-person learning forces me to action though; It is too soon. Cases are rising at an alarming rate, and bringing students back into schools effectively connects many, many worlds together for transmission. Missoula is a pretty small world.

I get it. You are trying to walk the tightrope of public opinion between "It's just a bad flu" and "The fabric of the world is crumbling!"; no easy task. But if billion-dollar corporations with hundreds of thousands of employees can shift their entire operational model to support remote work, why can't we? Children will adapt, and so will adults.

If anything this pandemic will give children a better set of tools for life in the future than previous generations. (I sure wish I had a chance to learn more about working remote while I was in school). It's not going to be perfect, but I've yet to hear of someone getting COVID-19 from a zoom meeting.

As a state and a nation we've all sacrificed for the greater good. Our jobs, recreation, entire relationships and lives have all fallen victim to COVID-19. Reopening schools to full in-person education at this time feels disrespectful to those sacrifices.

Did we spend our whole spring, summer and fall away from our family and friends, only to worry about my wife getting it from her job at MCPS? How many cases have to get before we roll back this decision? How many deaths? Are we making this decision purely out of pragmatism, or is our own bias smudging the lines of rational thought?

This isn't a decision that falls back on the Governor, Mayor, CDC, or Missoula Public Health Department. It's yours, and it directly affects the health and well-being of the entire community you serve.

I beg you to reconsider and push your decision out further, once we have a better picture of the increased transmission rates and cases.

History tends to remember brash, violent decisions vividly and often forgets more conservative, level headed thought.

I think in 2020, the latter would be preferred by all.

Thanks for your time,

—
Alex Pearsall, Missoulain

MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

switching from in person to remote

2 messages

Mike Nemacheck <freeagentteam@yahoo.com>

Fri, Sep 25, 2020 at 1:27 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Hello, I have a daughter at Hellgate HS participating in the hybrid learning but am becoming increasingly concerned about the spike in covid in missoula. Am wondering if there is a way to switch to online for my daughter at this late time.

Wishing i would've signed up when i could but was hoping things were going to get better.

Thanks, Mike Nemacheck

Phase 2 schedule at the high school level

Caroline Lurgio <cclurgio@mcpsmt.org>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Fri, Sep 25, 2020 at 2:56 PM

September 25, 2020

Dear MCPS Board Members and Dr. Robert Watson,

As we anticipate moving into Phase 2 at the high school level, I would like to make a request that Mondays continue to be used as a "Remote" day and that the high schools plan for a four day face to face schedule. I understand that we have two hours every morning to prep, but those hours are being used to attend IEPs and 504s, make last minute copies, meet with colleagues to review the day's materials, grade the previous day's assignments in order to use in the current class period, and meet as a Staff with our administration- both IB and regular. We really need more time to successfully meet the needs of our students and the demands of our curriculum. Here are my reasons for keeping Mondays remote:

1. In the past, Hellgate had one class period a week where students could meet with teachers to make up missing assignments, work to improve grades, and get extra help. This was called our Office Hours time and it took place every Wednesday. With the new schedule, we now use Mondays as our only day and time to connect, though virtually, with students who are struggling or have missed school for illness, sports, or other reasons. Missing a class period in this hybrid model equates to missing at least 3 full class periods; there is a lot to address- skills and assessments.
2. Because Covid could require a teacher to be absent at any time, we are working hard with our peers to stay lock-step with the curriculum at each grade level. This way, we can ensure that other teachers could step in if needed. We are currently using Mondays to PLC in order to backwards plan for condensed chunks of time. This requires ensuring building blocks are used to lead to a final assessment, scheduling these blocks with ample time to assess for the next step, and preparing the right materials. Planning for 8-10 hours of in class instruction/ week will alter our current model and require new planning and preparation.

I only have two reasons but I think they are crucial to our current success and sanity. Moving forward, I expect my job to be more difficult, more risky, and more rewarding. But, without having a day built in to plan, prep, and work, I'm not sure that I can be successful.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Caroline Lurgio



**Be Safe.
Be Respectful.
Be Responsible.
Be a Graduate.
Be a KNIGHT!**

Hybrid plus and phase 2

Carmen coots <cootsdvm@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Sat, Sep 26, 2020 at 11:34 AM

Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees,

As a parent of a sophomore and a 7th grader participating in in-person Phase 1 at Sentinel and Washington, I was astounded by the board's decision this past Tuesday to advance to the next level of school reopening in the face of the recent huge increase in Covid-19 cases both in Missoula County and statewide. I was unfortunately unable to remotely attend Tuesday's meeting due to work, but I want to register my extreme opposition to the current plan. Under both Hybrid Plus and Phase 2, the number of students in school buildings will double, making physical distancing in classrooms, hallways, and common areas impossible. In addition, the number of people with whom students, faculty, and staff will come into close contact on any given day will also double. I am not an epidemiologist, but I have a bachelor's degree in biology and have been a doctor of veterinary medicine for the past 22 years. During that time I have treated numerous patients infected with or exposed to infectious viruses. When there is a viral outbreak with rising case counts, increasing numbers of individuals in indoor spaces without appropriate physical distancing is absolutely inappropriate and dangerous. The board's published plan to advance to Hybrid Plus and Phase 2 included the statement, "This will be re-evaluated each week with the Missoula Health Department." Does this mean that the plan could change due to ever increasing active cases in our county? We started the school year in Phase 1 when cases were dramatically lower than they are currently. Under Phase 1 we understand that there is some risk in sending our kids to school, but we have felt that the current protocols (2 days in-person, student body split into 2 groups, small class size, masking, etc) have mitigated that risk adequately. It makes no sense to open schools further in the face of the current spike in cases, morbidity, and mortality the state and county are currently experiencing. If 1 student, teacher, staff member, or family member falls seriously ill or dies due to this ill-conceived decision, the school board will be responsible. Please schedule an additional meeting as soon as possible to re-evaluate the current plan with input from the health department, epidemiological data, and concerned parents.

Thank you,
Carmen Coots, DVM
319-471-5051
cootsdvm@gmail.com

Comment on all students return to school

Brenda Nordtome <breez2052@aol.com>

Sun, Sep 27, 2020 at 3:42 PM

Reply-To: Brenda Nordtome <breez2052@aol.com>

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

*Good afternoon,**9/27/20**I work for MCPS as does my husband and daughter, my younger daughter attends high school here as well.**We have been contacted twice by the high school that my daughter's group would have contact tracing and may have been exposed/be a close contact of fellow students who were out of school for exposure/possible exposure/on quarantine for Covid-19. My husband had a co-worker out of school who returned to report they tested negative which was wonderful. Where I work recently sent students home from school because family members have tested positive. I have a coworker whose son is on quarantine away from his spouse and children.**This last week/weekend it has been disheartening to open the newspaper to read the headlines below knowing that my children, my husband, and myself will be in school this week and the potential of, within a few weeks, all students (outside of the MOA) returning to classrooms creating an even greater inability to social distance.**When did common sense and concern for others leave education? Wearing face coverings, avoiding groups, physically distancing from others are not difficult and the students have been great about everything including social distancing so why are we taking away their ability to social distance safely by bringing all students all days as the Covid-19 count increases daily/weekly in our community? Why have we become so impatient?**This too shall pass.**Brenda Nordtome***Trustees: All students in school daily by Nov. 9** Laura Scheer Sep 22, 2020https://missoulain.com/news/local/trustees-all-students-in-school-daily-by-nov-9/article_5d676e8a-1eb7-5300-a678-7f7026c16a1f.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share

MCPS said any approved schedule will be assessed on a weekly basis in consultation with the Missoula City-County Health Department.

Missoula Co. at highest active COVID-19 count yet Seaborn Larson Sep 25, 2020

https://missoulain.com/news/local/missoula-co-at-highest-active-covid-19-count-yet/article_bbef6adc-c0fb-5ea8-80ea-d31c90f3b4ca.html

Missoula County on Friday had notched its highest active case count since the COVID-19 pandemic began in mid-March, according to public health officer Ellen Leahy. On Friday Missoula County tallied 238 active cases, and more than 1,000 close contacts, also the highest that figure has ever been, Leahy said. The county reported 32 new active cases Friday, making 95 new cases in the last 48 hours.

Montana COVID cases hit new high, passing the record set two days ago ROB ROGERS Sep 26, 2020

https://missoulain.com/news/state-and-regional/montana-covid-cases-hit-new-high-passing-the-record-set-two-days-ago/article_3decdb2b-2ea0-5c8b-a19e-80f055023c5c.html

'The pandemic in Montana continues to surge as the number of new COVID-19 cases reported on Saturday hit a new high.'... Elsewhere in the state, Missoula County reported 254 active cases, 33 of them new.

'Sobering and stunning': Dr Fauci warns against surging Covid cases as death toll reaches 200,000 and Trump remains silent Alex Woodward New York 4 days ago

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/covid-cases-usa-dr-fauci-trump-coronavirus-death-toll-b536784.html>

Infectious disease expert urges Americans to follow public health guidelines

Dr Anthony Fauci has warned that the US must significantly reduce its daily average of new coronavirus cases by following simple public health protocols or risk another surge in infections, as the nation's death toll for Covid-19 has eclipsed the loss of more than 200,000 lives. ...Guidelines urged by public health officials for months – wearing face coverings, avoiding groups, physically distancing from others

USA Today/MONEY Keith Speights The Motley Fool

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/09/21/bill-gates-company-coronavirus-vaccine-leader/42634527/>

Here's the company that Bill Gates thinks is the clear coronavirus vaccine leader

The billionaire philanthropist thinks one company could have a coronavirus vaccine ready by November.

Bill Gates isn't an epidemiologist. He has no medical training. But when the billionaire philanthropist talks about vaccines, it pays to listen.

Bill Gates reveals when he thinks the US will finally be able to defeat the coronavirus

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/bill-gates-reveals-when-he-thinks-the-us-will-finally-be-able-to-defeat-the-coronavirus/ar-BB19ox8o>



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Full school

Adam Boomer <boomer42@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, Sep 28, 2020 at 8:21 AM

Dear Trustees,

I am very concerned with the rush to move towards full time school with full student body. This summer considering putting our faculty, staff, students and families at risk seemed very measured. The decision to put our schools back in full sessions is reckless. You are supposed to educate our children. Yet the fact that there is a pandemic going on and death and or permanent is coming for some of our students, faculty and families because of your decisions.

The superintendent stated this summer that he would watch the numbers and make calls based on science. The numbers do not lie. We are seeing a exponential spike in cases and community spread. Is this easy on parents and families no. But guess what having a parent or child die because of our optional decision seems insane. This is not a fake pandemic. According to epidemiologist if the infection rate gets to more than 10 percent of the population our entire hospital system breaks. Just to ball park for you if let's say 100k population. 5 percent is 5k infected 10 percent of those will need to be hospitalized that is 500 hundred people. Completely overwhelming our systems. Yes let's say one percent die. That is only 50 humans. Who cares?

Adam Boomer



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

(no subject)

Anders Mejstrick <amejstrick@mcpsmt.org>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, Sep 28, 2020 at 1:18 PM

Hello,

My name is Anders and I'm a para over at Hawthorne Elementary.

I have great concern about Dr. Watson's drafts for opening school. I think it is extremely optimistic, even foolishly so, to look at phasing up to the next stage of opening school. We're just starting to see the results of us opening up when we did as we did, and Missoula has been rising rather dramatically in cases. We've seen a nearly 5 times increase in new cases reported.

Those cases have been in the school district with the two in Sentinel, 1 in Big Sky and 1 at Target Range. I feel like these cases are just going to keep increasing and even faster if we phase up. I feel like this is a very dangerous situation and will be absolutely disastrous if we keep letting it go.

Thank you for listening,
Anders Mejstrick

P.S. I wrote this originally before the board meeting on the 20th, and I honestly have to wonder if any of the board members will take responsibility when things go sideways? If we have deaths due to Covid, will you own up to your mistakes or will you shift the blame elsewhere? We seem to be setting new records for new cases almost every other day at this point.

I'm disappointed in all of you who voted to open up further. I can only hope that you open your eyes and look around to see what's going on.

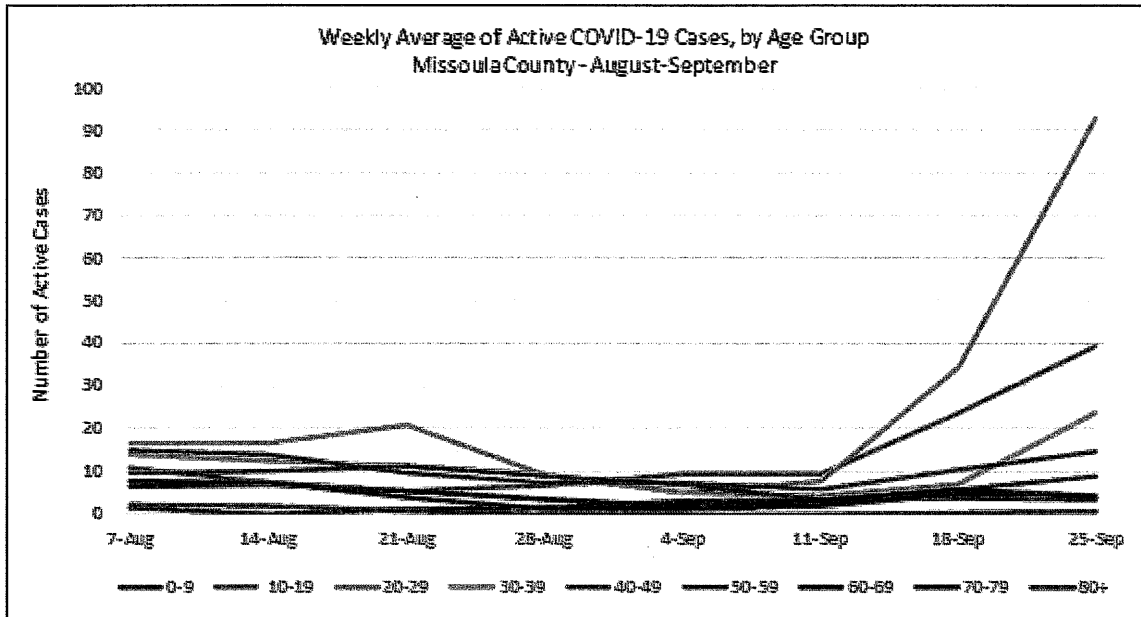
Public Comment - Please keep us safe

Karin Balke <karinbalke@hotmail.com>

Mon, Sep 28, 2020 at 3:01 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Cc: "javgeris@mcpsmt.org" <javgeris@mcpsmt.org>, "meholland@mcpsmt.org" <meholland@mcpsmt.org>, "dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org" <dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org>, "vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org" <vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org>, "kmercer@mcpsmt.org" <kmercer@mcpsmt.org>, "woldperson@mcpsmt.org" <woldperson@mcpsmt.org>, "gdecker@mcpsmt.org" <gdecker@mcpsmt.org>, "ssterbis@mcpsmt.org" <ssterbis@mcpsmt.org>



Dear Board of Trustees,

I write to you today as a concerned parent and teacher to urge you to please do not have all students come back to school Tuesday through Friday (Hybrid Plus). This is putting the safety of our staff, students, parents, caregivers, and community at risk. I added the most recent graph from the Missoula County Health Department in the beginning of my email because I think that orange line says it all. The increasing in student cases is unacceptable and the fact that the elementary cases are not being reported on is despicable.

Despite people wanting this pandemic to be over, it is not. We need to face facts and make the tough decisions to keep our community healthy. Promises that were made to us as parents and teachers over the summer keep getting broken. I know all teachers want to have all their students in the classroom, but I have yet to talk to even one teacher who thinks this is a good or safe idea to have them all come back so early. It is already impossible to properly social distance in the current phase, so thinking of having twice as many students together is a recipe for disaster.

In our schools with high populations, that the boundry study did not help to relieve... students are so packed into classrooms it's hard to walk around. The only other venue I can think of comparatively would be a live music concert and those are still shut down.

Why are teachers viewed as disposable? Please keep us safe, for the sake of our families and students. Keep us in the current hybrid phase.

Sincerely,
Karin Balke

Please reconsider doubling the amount of students in the classroom on November 9

Ryan Heuwinkel <rth009@msn.com>

Mon, Sep 28, 2020 at 3:13 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Board of Trustees:

I am the parent of a kindergartner and a 4th grader at Paxson Elementary School. My understanding is that the District's plan is to have all of the students who are attending in-person back in school 5 days per week by November 9. This would double the number of students in the classroom at a time. As you know, Missoula County has seen a huge spike in cases recently and we now have many times the amount of virus in our community than we have ever had. Increasing the number of students in the classroom will increase the spread of the virus, which will pose more danger to students, staff, and their families and is more likely to result in a full closure of the schools. While November 9 is a ways off, and things could change, it is unlikely that case numbers will be down enough by then to warrant an increase in the number of students in the classroom. Accordingly, please reconsider the plan to increase the number of students in the classroom. 2 days per week of in-person instruction is far better than 0 days per week.

Thank you for considering this comment,

Ryan Heuwinkel
140 University Ave
Missoula, MT 59801
Parent of Paxson kindergarten and 4th graders

Please Reconsider

Whitney Guthrie <jamesandwhitney2@gmail.com>

Mon, Sep 28, 2020 at 4:48 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

To MCPS Board of Trustees-

The first time I reached out about reopening school I was reaching out as an educator within the school district. Today I'm reaching out as a parent of two high school students. I definitely considered the MOA for my boys but because Missoula's numbers were relatively low and we were being conservative with reopening I thought it would be an acceptable and minimal risk to take. It was also acceptable because we were informed that if our numbers began to rise we would immediately step back and go 100% remote until things balanced out.

Not once did it occur to me that decisions would be made to risk the health and safety of my children. I'm having a hard time understanding why we are even considering going back to every student everyday. We all watch the Covid numbers each day and it's a reminder that our current situation is and is continuing to be out of control. Things have NOT plateaued or decreased and things are NOT getting better. We are headed into the time of year when people start getting the common cold, flu and bronchitis. If we add Covid to that equation why would we even consider changing schedules to squeeze more people into small classrooms with no ventilation and no way to socially distance.

This past weekend was my first direct experience with Covid-19 and the stress and worry that comes with it. My son started showing symptoms of a common head cold late Friday night (which could also be Covid) he had a low grade fever on Sunday afternoon (could also be Covid- made me panic) Made the appointment Monday morning for the dreaded Covid test. Waited in line at the drive through testing place (our family doctor's office- health department phone line kept hanging up on me) for over an hour. The reasoning for the wait was because so many people are getting sick now with many different types of viruses that things are getting overwhelmed. Everything is Covid until you prove it's not.

This is what everyone is going to have to go through to prove they don't have Covid. Any sickness, any symptom could be Covid. You bring every student back everyday you are asking for things to continue to get out of control and this becomes dangerous. Adding more students into the equation can NOT be the answer. If you look at our numbers how can you even consider making such a drastic change.

If you make the decision to go back to every student everyday I would have greatly regretted not doing the MOA. I am sure I won't be the only parent looking for an alternative answer. I will acknowledge you are in an impossible situation and either way you vote someone will be upset. But the majority of the letters that came in just wanted more spectators to be allowed to watch football/ sports and activities. It seems like this impossible situation is made very simple. . .you have to vote to save lives, you have to vote to wait and see what our Covid numbers do, you have to vote to not put my children's lives at risk. Please don't rush things, the consequences are too great.

Sincerely,

Whitney Guthrie

Mother of Two High Schoolers

Letter to MSPS School Board

Carrie Richer <noelcarrie@gmail.com>

Mon, Sep 28, 2020 at 5:13 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, javgeris@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, gdecker@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org, meholland@mcpsmt.org, ssterbis@mcpsmt.org, dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, jrobitaille@mcpsmt.org

I am a parent of a new Kindergartener at Paxson Elementary School this year.

Of course, this year is unprecedented and everyone is making decisions about things we never thought we'd have to consider - I know you all are in this boat as well. I know there is no graceful way out and you are faced with difficult choices vs. worse choices.

We have had a good experience at Paxson so far this year which is saying ALOT considering the hybrid schedule, COVID, the lack of childcare, and the very minimal pains of our child attending school for the first time.

I wanted to mention that I am completely impressed with the job that Julie Robitaille has done as Paxson Principal. Her efforts, communications, decision-making and all have been outstanding. I have been very impressed with her performance in what is the most challenging job I can imagine right now. I see her face often, I see her trying, listening, I see her supporting, her teaching staff well plus all of the things she does that I don't see which is probably her 'normal' job description. I am sure many others at MCPS are doing just as incredible of a job in the face of this mess.

However, I am concerned about the decision to go move toward Hybrid+ or a 4-day model in mid-October.

I gather this decision was made because of the overwhelming challenge that families have faced for childcare which I get. I too have been in an unthinkable situation where I simply can't get my job done because my child is home and needs not only attention and care but constant support for the limited education she is receiving this year. It has been the hardest thing I have ever done - no exaggeration.

I know there are families who don't have the option of doing their whole job at night or some other weird 'fix' as I have done - in a strung-out fashion only 2020 could call a 'solution.'

Passing and agreeing to change to a 4-day week and merging classrooms for larger numbers in the midst of what are the worst COVID CASE numbers Missoula has experienced yet is irresponsible. It makes me very uncomfortable. I

would consider pulling my child out which means ALOT because then I am really not sure how I would do my job at all?

As a consequence, I would also not get paid and probably not make my mortgage. I say this to UNDERSCORE the seriousness of my decision to not send my child to school if MCPS ramps up to this 4-day/ week schedule.

Why - would you do this?

Why would you take something that MCPS is doing well, safely, responsible (against all odds), and undo this good work?!

Please, please reconsider this plan.

I urge you to stay in the 2-day Hybrid model longer as cases rise and as Fall arrives. Choose to have MCPS stay safe, be responsible or you will lose more enrolled students and families and they will have no support for school or childcare at all. This decision endangers our whole community, it disregards your teachers' safety, health, and families. It is too risky. Students being in school 2 days /week is hard for parents - it would be harder to be in lockdown again though!

I am outraged that on the same day of record-breaking COVID numbers that have risen exponentially you would vote to make this decision?! I don't write these letters often and I find myself doing so more and more this year but you need to hear from EVERYONE involved - not just squeaky wheels or (understandably) families that are in dire childcare crisis'. (they do need some kind of support.) This decision has massive community impact and should be a community decision. Your vote to shift to a Hybrid+ schedule communicates a disregard for the community as a WHOLE.

This year - the right thing is usually the hard decisions. Please make the right, more difficult choice that will keep us all safe.

I urge each of you to reconsider this October 13th shift, please.

Carrie Richer
Paxson Kindergartener Parent
421 North Ave
Missoula MT 59801



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Please reconsider moving to Hybrid Plus Phase

Elizabeth Stuckey <elizabethsandersstuckey@gmail.com>

Mon, Sep 28, 2020 at 5:20 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear Trustees,

Thank you for your continued hard work during these crazy times. As our Covid numbers continue to rise, please reconsider your decision to move into Hybrid Plus Phase October 13. Please do not send more children into the schools with Covid numbers rising rather, keep operating in the Hybrid Phase, so the class sizes will be smaller and exposure reduced. If numbers continue to rise please consider moving to virtual. Doubling the class sizes when numbers are rising will only cause Covid numbers to rise higher.

Much thanks,

Elizabeth Stuckey, mother of a kindergartner and fourth grader

**MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Please do not double the amount of students in the classroom on October 9

Ryan Heuwinkel <rth009@msn.com>

Tue, Sep 29, 2020 at 8:59 AM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Board of Trustees:

I am the parent of a kindergartner and a 4th grader at Paxson Elementary School. I understand that the District's plan is to have all of the students who are attending in-person back in school 5 days per week by October 9. What is the District's justification for doubling the number of students in the classroom at a time when Missoula County is seeing a huge spike in cases? We now have many times the amount of virus in our community than we have ever had and increasing the number of students in the classroom is certain to lead to more sick kids, teachers, and family members and could result in a full closure of the schools. 2 days per week of in-person instruction is far better than 0 days per week. Accordingly, please reconsider the plan to increase the number of students in the classroom.

Thank you for considering this comment,

Ryan Heuwinkel
140 University Ave
Missoula, MT 59801
Parent of Paxson kindergarten and 4th graders

MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Opposition to opening schools full time

Tara Graham <tgaswint7@gmail.com>

Tue, Sep 29, 2020 at 11:58 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

To whom it may concern:

I am parent to an MCPS student. I am also an MCPS employee. The thought of returning to full time during this time is extremely terrifying to me. Our cases as both a state and county are rising at higher rates than ever. We have had multiple cases within the MCPS schools already and its only going to get worse. Staff does a good job with safety and social distancing, but the students do not. The idea that we would increase the number of students here and increase the risk of exposure and transmission is very scary to me and many others. I live with and I am around people in the compromised groups daily. So, I want to do everything I can to keep myself and them safe. I would be in support of continuing with the current status or even going to full online. However, I am fully against opening schools full time to all students.

Thanks for your time,

Tara Graham

Hybrid +

TRACY WARNEKE-KLEPZIG <TANDCKLIPZIG@msn.com>

Tue, Sep 29, 2020 at 12:26 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

How can you put our kids back into school all together when the number of Covid cases in Missoula county have grown over 5 times the daily number that they were when we started school? You say you are doing everything you can to keep our children safe and that if the numbers increase that you would adjust the plan but instead, as numbers rise to 20+ new cases a day from the 6 cases a day we were at when school started. You are going to push 20+ children into each classroom making it impossible to social distance which is still the number one way the CDC says to slow the spread. What is this going to mean for our kids or our teachers? More than a handful of the cases each day are children under the age of 19. I see news about cases in the high schools but the fact that we have cases in our elementary schools as well seems to be slipping under the radar and past public knowledge. How is this helpful to the community as a whole? Shouldn't everyone know that this isn't just something that is affecting the adults of our population? Our children are our most precious resource and their health and safety should be our number one priority. How can you say that is what we are practicing with the way the numbers are increasing daily?

Hybrid allows people to contact trace when a case shows up and if someone needs to be quarantined it is only one or two children, where as with hybrid+ if we have a case in one classroom the entire class would have to quarantine. There is no social distancing for students or staff with this new plan and it truly feels unsafe for our children and our community.

Tracy



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

School Opening

Cheryl Bryant <cbryant@mcpsmt.org>

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 9:20 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

To Whom It May Concern ~ I'm writing in regards to the schools opening to full classes in November. I have concerns, as do a majority of my colleagues, with having all the students in the classrooms at the same time, with COVID-19 numbers on the rise in Missoula County. The physical distancing in the classrooms and hallways that is currently being observed is achieved because of splitting the student body in half. I feel it is hasty to put more students in contact with each other and staff until the virus has been better contained and more is known about it. We're all doing our best and I respect that parents are struggling with having their kids home, but we must observe safety first.

Thank you for considering all opinions in this matter.

Cheryl Bryant
Para Life Skills
Meadow Hill

modifications to hybrid schedule through MCPS

daniel geary <dancgear@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 9:24 AM

Greetings:

I write as an MCPS janitor but from a personal e-mail and as a citizen, not an employee.

MCPS is not ready--per the unreadiness of the county based on infection rates--for increased attendance.

Schools are understaffed in the custodial arena; recent advertisements for extra workers starting at \$13.++ per hour with employment only guaranteed to Dec. 31 illustrate with what low priority the Dept. of Operations considers hourly cleaning as a defense against contagion. Frugals Speedy Burgers is offering better terms. Go figure.

Social distancing is predetermined by the dimensions of a room. There is no grey area in this assertion. Even today---at our County's highest infection rate---ten children will remove their masks for 20 minutes to eat lunch. One assumes the viral load of the air then becomes compromised. What will happen when there are 20 children in this room? Please vote NOT to put 20 children in a room the dimensions of which will disallow any reasonable social distancing of unmasked children. Concerns about learning and food availability, while profoundly serious, must come after life-and-death risks.

This--the reduction of life-and-death risks--is your explicit responsibility. I hope you will hold a hard, healthy line against overpopulating MCPS schools; that is your gold standard: life.

Additionally, as a professional custodian (I prefer the word janitor), I hope you will show due diligence in investigating the understaffing of custodial staff and actually interview someone employed in this job capacity. You may do so as a private citizen if you feel this too-thinly stretches the role assigned to board members.

Thank you! Daniel Geary

Every time I see something terrible, it's like I see it at age 19. I keep a freshness that way.

Ralph Nader

MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Please do not proceed with hybrid in Nov

Sara Flanery <saraflanery@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 9:29 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear School Board,

I'm very concerned out the amount of viral spread in our community.

Please follow the advice of virologists and medical professionals and keep our community safer by considering a move to phase 0.

Thanks,

Sara Flanery



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

K-5 Hybrid Plus

Denise Hahnstadt <dhahnstadt@mcpsmt.org>

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 9:33 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Our K-5 students need to attend in-person 4 days/week. They are not yet developed or disciplined enough for independent online instruction. Take home packets for those without devices or online capability are not instructive but supportive like the usual homework, so true instruction is now just 2 days a week.

In-person attendance not only provides instruction, but also food, social skills, counseling, social interaction, exercise, and development of good study habits. Because of this whole body learning, students need to be in school 4-5 days a week.

I am a 67 years old and have worked as a para in this District since 1994, Even though I am in a higher risk group because of my age and an underlying health condition, I feel comfortable working at Hawthorne. Our students and staff wear masks, wash their hands, wipe down surfaces, and distance as much as possible. We are teaching good hygiene which is a lifelong skill.

We also know that masks are the primary key to prevention along with handwashing. Yes, with both groups combined, distancing is the greatest issue. However, when our K-5 students are in school, they are safe, are being fed, are learning numerous life skills, as well as receiving their grade level instruction.

I fully support K-5 attending in-person instruction 4-5 days a week beginning October 19 through Christmas break.

Thank you for serving on this most important board.

Denise Hahnstadt

Hawthorne Elementary School Room 422

550 Hiberta St

Missoula, MT 59804-1146

(406) 728-2400 Ext 4297



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Comment about MCPS Phasing Model for Reopening

Amy Ratzlaf <aratzlaf@msn.com>

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 10:54 AM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

To Whom It May Concern

My name is Amy Ratzlaf and I am the parent of 2 children who attend schools in the Missoula County Public School system-one is at Washington Middle School and the other is at Hellgate High School. First, I would like to say a big thank you to everyone at MCPS for their hard work in trying to navigate these unprecedented times. My children are currently participating in the hybrid model-2 days in-school and 3 days of remote learning. I am very uncomfortable with the plan to move forward to more in-school time in just a few weeks, when the current COVID cases are rising in Missoula and Montana. I would like to ask that you postpone the plan to increase in-school time until we have a better understanding of how the pandemic will impact our community during the next few months.

Thank you

Amy Ratzlaf

**MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Go school go

Cole Cooney <mbctg@live.com>

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 11:19 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

I'd like to see all kids..all grades...go all the time. There is risk in living. Mental health and normalcy are soooo important and outweighs the smallest percentage of risk the pandemic is causing. Using common sense as always prevails. Stop the insanity of creating panic where none needs to be.

Thank you!

Michelle Cooney

Re: Reasoning for the Return to a Full Time Schedule

Jessica Shontz <jessshontz@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 11:22 AM

Reply-To: jess.shontz@gmail.com

To: javgeris@mcpsmt.org, gdecker@mcpsmt.org, meholland@mcpsmt.org, dlornzen@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org, ssterbis@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org

Cc: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Good morning,

As I have not heard back from anyone regarding my questions, I wanted to send a follow-up. To be succinct, I would like to know how you intend to keep my child safe with the return to 100% population capacity in school.

Best,
Jessica Shontz

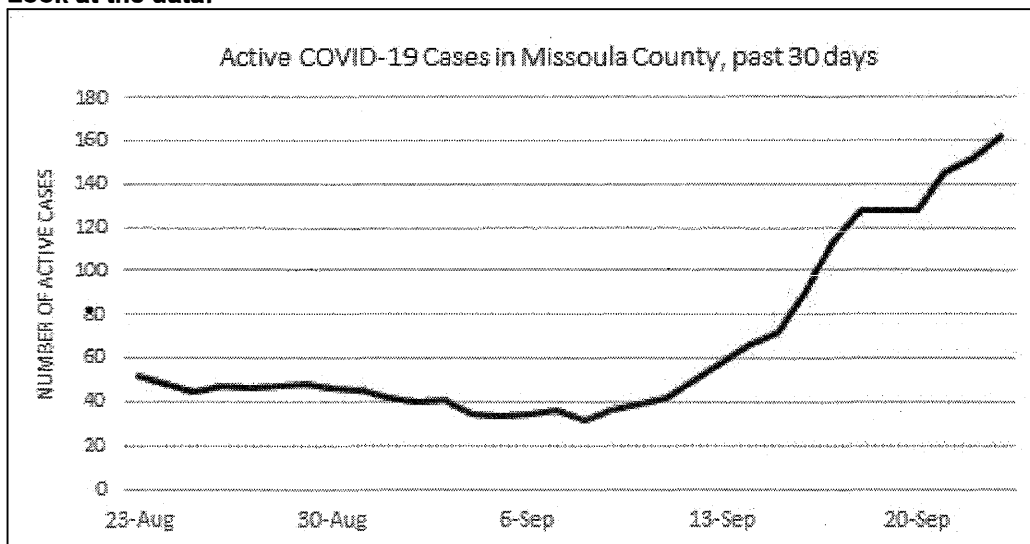
On Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 5:45 PM Jessica Shontz <jessshontz@gmail.com> wrote:

To the members of the Missoula County Public Schools Board of Trustees:

Your decision to return to full time, in-person learning despite increased numbers of people infected with COVID-19 in Missoula County is not just baffling, it's insane and negligent.

How do you justify the increased risk to our children and their teachers? You know that cases are increasing. You know that physical distancing is not possible. You know that despite teachers' best intentions and efforts, students will not wear their masks all the time.

I work a full-time job, as does my husband. We are not unfamiliar with the struggles of helping a student learn remotely when we cannot be home during the day. We allowed our child to attend school with the hybrid schedule because we were assured that the board would follow the data closely before making any decisions about a return to the full-time schedule.

Look at the data:**Explain yourselves.**

I work at the University of Montana, and am deeply, painfully aware of how much work goes into keeping students safe. We are facing anger, backlash, and extreme budget deficits, and we still made the difficult decision to keep the number of in-person classes as low as possible. It's the only way to protect our students, staff, and faculty.

10/1/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - Re: Reasoning for the Return to a Full Time Schedule

I am angry. I want actual answers as to how you arrived at this decision.

I send my sincere thanks to Wilena Old Person and Grace Decker for trying to protect my child.

I await your response,
Jessica Shontz



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

A Plan for the Future

Robert Jeffs <rjeffs@mcpsmt.org>

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 3:18 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear Board members, Rob Watson, and others

I would like to address phase 3 when "the Online Academy may stay open to certain students who qualify due to significant health issues" and "the MCPS Online Academy will be available to students while we are in Phase 0 - 2 of our phased reopening plan", but it seems will be phased out after completion of phase 2. (<https://www.mcpsmt.org/Page/15753>) I don't think this will be the last virus to sweep the country or the world. We have handled, Mars, Sers, Ebola, and many other contagions in the past, but it would be arrogant and foolish to think that this is the last one. In fact, we have not yet "handled" or overcome Covid-19 and there are reports of other viruses brewing in the world.

I propose planning for the future and in doing so, we plan for the possibility of needing to have a fully operational and functional online academy at all times. MCPS has only given the Missoula Online Academy (MOA) 7 months to become fully functional whereas in-person public schools have had 100 years to work out the kinks and they are still working to improve.

This is a good time to allow the MOA to continue to work out their kinks and become a regular option for public education in Missoula. Offering a full-time online education may keep federal money for students within the MCPS system. Families who home school their children may sign up for online education at MOA to take advantage of free instruction, thereby the federal dollars earmarked for their children's education would go into the MCPS coffers and thus supporting MOA. It may even result in the MOA paying for itself. MOA may also expand by attracting rural online learners. The advantage over homeschooling is that MOA is an accredited education and accreditation is something homeschooling lacks, as well as free instruction to complement their homeschooling agendas.

Please keep the MOA operational to support students who thrive there and to prepare with a functional and operational online education for the inevitable virus and school shutdown in our future. It is a responsible plan for our future. We may find that online education is a good fit for some learners. It would be a waste of time and energy to close down the online academy after so much work has been put into making it operational and functional. Please keep the MOA alive and thriving.

Rob Jeffs
Para Educator
Washington Middle School



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Covid Plan

Sandra House <shouse@mcpsmt.org>

Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 6:32 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Good evening,

I am writing today not only as a staff member, but also as a proud parent of two members of the MCPS community. I know that my children would be happy to return to school, as would I, but, my concern is moving too quickly. If the children are sent back too soon, I would not want to risk an entire shutdown and have to return to 100% online learning.

As cases rise quickly in the county, I feel it could pose a risk when you have all of the children back in the same classroom, and there is little opportunity for social distancing. Another note, flu season is fast approaching, and I would be fearful of the effects, even on the kids, of possibly dealing with a flu and covid infection simultaneously. This fall is new territory for the scientific community, and I feel that things are working at the present moment, so why change that. I feel like a safer option would be to wait and reassess after the holidays. I'm sure there may be families that don't heed the advice of the experts, and travel without self-isolating upon their return. Again, my concern would be returning to school, and having to implement a complete shutdown again. I think if the district is cautious, we'll have a better chance of keeping some in-person learning.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns. I hope you take all opinions into consideration and I'm so happy to be a part of this community.

Sincerely,
Sandra House



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Phased Re-opening

Douglas Rossberg <djrossberg@mcpsmt.org>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 7:47 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

I am writing to urge the Board of Trustees to extend the hybrid model through the end of the 1st Trimester.

While other K-8 elementary districts in Missoula have returned to a model of all kids, they also have been the first to report student COVID cases - meanwhile in MCPS, we have had 0. This is a result of the safety of our current model, one that has allowed for incredible amounts of individualized instruction even among the challenges of social distancing and cleaning protocols.

Last month, I encouraged board members to visit my classroom and experience the hybrid model to no avail or response. I can even set up a Zoom for you to watch how things work! We have been successful in avoiding student cases K-8, and we also have been tremendously successful working with student academics, offering the individualized experience that these kids deeply needed after 6 months away from school.

Please move slow, and don't move away from the hybrid model until we have the data to support it - whether or not we like it, the community data and the school's are absolutely linked.

Thank you!

Doug Rossberg
Chief Charlo Elementary School 2nd grade
djrossberg@mcpsmt.org
728-2400 ext. 4980



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Fwd: encouragement

Jill MH Taber <jill.michal@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 9:03 AM

To: javgeris@mcpsmt.org, gdecker@mcpsmt.org, kmercer@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org, ssterbis@mcpsmt.org, meholland@mcpsmt.org, dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org, publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Good morning, members of MCPS school board,

Below is an email I wrote to Dr. Watson this morning. I share it both as an encouragement to each of you to consider the welfare of our school children when you meet this evening, as well as a public comment for the board meeting.

Thank you.

Jill Taber

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jill MH Taber** <jill.michal@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 8:59 AM

Subject: encouragement

To: Rob Watson <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us>

Cc: Nick Taber <nick.taber58@gmail.com>

Good morning, Dr. Watson.

I waited to respond to yesterday's email; I took the night and the morning to pray and to hopefully offer a more measured response.

As you know from our previous conversation and emails, I'm very frustrated and discouraged with the lack of attention to the needs of kids in COVID-related decision-making. I am encouraged that you support getting back to school and that you are concerned about the effects of remote learning on students' overall academic progress.

My son, Nolan, used to enjoy school. This school year is disappointing and hard. Every week he has to transition from summer mode to back-to-school mode. We're doing the homework assignments, but I realize that it is more important than ever for me to provide additional learning opportunities for him. While I applaud your recommendation and the board's approval to get back to school, unfortunately, I believe it is a can we will continue to kick down the road.

This morning, I am reminded of a few thoughts, said more elegantly that I am able, that I would share as encouragement to you and to our school board. The voices calling for a continuation of remote learning are loud, I know. One is from a man in Bozeman, who said a few weeks ago: "What is best for our kids may be uncomfortable for adults." The other is from an interview with Scott Atlas from the September 5-6, 2020 *Wall Street Journal*: " 'Children are very low-risk. They have virtually zero risk of dying, and a very, very low risk of any serious illness from this disease. We know that. But we also know that there are enormous harms to not opening up schools to children. And yet this isn't somehow part of the discussion.' He runs through a jarring list of such harm caused by distance learning, including, by one estimate, a 30% drop in reading ability and a 50% decline in math skills. Children need socializing, too: 'They don't go to school just to learn what's in a book.' They learn 'maturation, conflict resolution, physical fitness.' Schools are where a lot of kids get fed properly. **'We can't,' he says, 'be the only country in the Western world that is willing to sacrifice our children out of our own fear.'** "

Thanks for taking the time to listen.

Jill Taber

Jill MH Taber



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Transition to hybrid plus learning model

Tricia Thien <outlook_0FB74215DBA03715@outlook.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 11:41 AM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

To the MCPS Board of Trustees,

It is with great concern that I want to add my comment and input to the decision to move to the hybrid plus plan the week of October 19th. It is with great skepticism I wonder why we would start in a hybrid model with covid-19 rates at significantly lower levels than they are today, yet move into the hybrid plus model at this time. With skyrocketing numbers in our state, record high today being 429, moving forward seems suspicious at this point.

Not only am I a concerned parent, I am also a registered nurse at one of our local hospitals. I am extremely familiar with covid-19 protocols and safety measures. I also understand as a parent the importance of in school learning. However, a balance surely needs to be maintained. Why would we push forward and risk the lives of our children, our educators, our school staff, and families of students? My 80yr old mother lives with us. She is on chemotherapy and extremely high risk. Making the decision to send my son to in person school was made with much contemplation and hesitance. However, I fully support the current hybrid model of learning so long as safety protocols are maintained and covid-19 cases do not become prevalent in my son's school.

So, why is it that I feel I put more time and consideration into my decision than is being made on the greater scale? It makes me a little suspicious of where the pressure to move into this hybrid plus and eventually a normal schedule so quickly is coming from. I would sincerely hope that the politics of this election year don't have more influence and meaning than the lives of our children and citizens.

If you do, for some reason decide to push forward, will there be options for those of us that disagree with this? I truly believed we would not be pushing forward so quickly, or would have given greater consideration to starting in the strictly online mode. For those of us that have great certainty at the likely consequences of moving forward, will there be an offer of moving to strictly online at this point? If not, please revisit this as surely I'm not the only parent feeling this way.

I implore you to ask the hard questions, use scientific evidence and mindset, and make the right decision for all of us. If we move too quickly, can you all live with the consequences of this? Can you live with the possible impact on the families you serve? Can you live with the knowledge that illnesses and death could have been prevented if it comes to that? Believe me, I would love nothing more than for my son to be in school on a regular schedule as I feel he learns more effectively, and as a child, needs that interaction with his peers. However, these are new times, and these things won't matter if we let things get out of control. Let's learn from what we see on the news, let's learn from what is happening at universities and colleges, let's learn from what is happening in other countries. Do the right thing. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tricia Thien, RN, BSN, CGRN



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

In-school schedule data

Stephanie Lauer <smulicalauer@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 12:36 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear MCPS Board,

As part of your deliberations this evening, please consider and disclose to the public how many close *school related* contacts got COVID from an individual that was at a school. Parents need to know whether the protocols followed by schools are working. You showed the number of COVID positives associated with each school group. You showed the number of close contacts identified with those COVID positives. But how many staff or students actually got COVID as a result of being in close contact with those positives?

You need to tell parents whether school protocols are doing their job - which is protecting other staff and students from the inevitable positive cases that will enter a school. That will also help inform your decisions on whether to move forward with more in-school days. If the protocols are working then students should be allowed to GO TO SCHOOL!

Thank you.

Stephanie Lauer



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Reopening plan

Leslie Guerreri <lguerreri@mcpsmt.org>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 12:44 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello Board of Trustees,

I am writing to express my support of the MMCEO and MEA message to the school board concerning the schedule/phasing for our schools. The rising numbers of COVID cases in our community means that we need to continue with the phase that is currently protecting most of our students and staff. I am very concerned that going to Hybrid Plus or Phase 2 will put those protections at risk.

Thank you for your consideration and hard work on this situation.

Sincerely,

Leslie Guerreri

Leslie Guerreri

C.S. Porter Middle School

School Counselor

6th grade last names A-K and 7th grade

406-721-2400 ext. 4608

Please consider a thorough plan to scale back before we consider moving forward

Lindsay Manzo <lmanzo@mcpsmt.org>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 12:46 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear board of trustees,

As I am sure you can tell - my concerns about teaching in person have been increasing since the start of the year. IF cases in Missoula were currently decreasing, I might feel different. I cannot - like some people - pretend that our students are not part of this greater community. Just because we have not seen a huge increase in cases in the school - does not mean our students and their families are immune to the virus. I think that maybe our 'safe version' we are in is helping keep the numbers lower - but truly I think delays, incubation time, having 5 days for students to develop symptoms before they come back to school and students generally being asymptomatic - probably are more likely the cause of low numbers in our schools.

I know that all of us teachers would prefer in person education for students and learning, but I want this virus to stop rising in our community and to stop having such a strong effect on our lives. I want it gone or lowered as quickly as possible. In order to do that - we have to stay safe and lower the spread. THEN MAYBE we can have a normal educational experience for all sooner than later. We are currently making choices that will drag out students working from home (I have students who are quarantined and need to be home full time for two weeks) or online. Lets just commit to being safe and ending the spread. Let us also commit to making changes to our plans when cases increase? In order to be a good teacher, I need to have back up plans and reroutes all the time to accommodate students, timing, learning, etc. I have to constantly know when to switch what i am doing AND I have to be transparent with my students about when we will change what we are doing to help support them or keep them safe. I think that our plans for this semester should have the same requirements - for the sake of students and the greater missoula community.

I support our Union President's suggestion - and think you should as well : ***Staying the course until at least the end of the quarter and until we have a decrease in case counts, adequate staffing in buildings, and a solid plan to phase back (as requested by Cindy Farr in the last board meeting) is the best choice for our students, our staff, and our community at this point in time.***

Please put a transparent plan in place so that we can all trust we are not just steamrolling to destination without considering the health consequences.

Lindsay Manzo
Sentinel High School
Biology/Wildlife Biology
lmanzo@mcps.k12.mt.us



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

School reopening

Michele Nokleby <mnokleby@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 1:20 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello, I have a little grandson in kindergarten this year (he loves it!) We are settled in to our new routine and schedule, and he is thriving.

I am really worried about a premature return to regular-sized class groupings and scheduling. I have a compromised immune system and would not do well with a Covid infection, and as much as I love my grandchild, he is a germy little fellow, and is likely to bring home the virus if he is exposed.

Additionally, our family had to work hard to find a place for our little guy during the "off" days. If we pull him out of daycare to attend school 5 days a week, we will lose his hard-earned spot in the daycare. That is all well and good if Covid cases decline, but if they continue to climb and schools close again, we will be in a terrible bind for childcare.

Cases in Missoula aren't consistently declining, in fact the opposite is true. I don't understand why you are even considering a school situation that will imperil our community. Please make responsible, cautious decisions about reopening. Thank you.



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Tonight's board meeting

lbond@bresnan.net <lbond@bresnan.net>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 1:27 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, "rwatson@mcpsmt.org" <rwatson@mcpsmt.org>

I am writing to request that the MCPS board of trustees and superintendent Rob Watson hold off of any plans to move forward with the reopening process. Missoula is seeing larger numbers of new cases than ever before and if this trend continues we will need to shut Missoula down again instead of moving forward with normal life. I ask you as a parent of a staff member and as a Missoula community member to use some common sense and keep things as they are at this point.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration:
Loraine Bond

Children shown to be superspreaders of COVID-19

Beth Morey <eamorey@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 1:46 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, javgeris@mcpsmt.org, kmercerc@mcpsmt.org, gdecker@mcpsmt.org, woldperson@mcpsmt.org, meholland@mcpsmt.org, mjsmith@mcpsmt.org, dllorenzen@mcpsmt.org, ssterbis@mcpsmt.org, vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org, jvogel@mcpsmt.org, awake@mcpsmt.org

This study just came out of Princeton:

“...children and young adults were found to be potentially much more important to transmitting the virus — especially within households — than previous studies have identified, according to a paper by researchers from the United States and India published Sept. 30 in the journal *Science*.”

Source: <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2020/09/30/largest-covid-19-contact-tracing-study-date-finds-children-key-spread-evidence>

Does this information combined with the exponential spread of coronavirus in Montana (429 new cases added today, a new high) alter your plans to push through to a full reopening of schools in November?

Beth Morey
MCPS parent, Franklin Elementary/MOA



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Comments for meeting October 1st

lorie dulemba <mtngrl37@yahoo.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 3:07 PM

Hello. I am a parent of an elementary school student at LewisandClark. I think MCPS should freeze the reopening program at the stage they are at until Covid numbers start to go down. The state had a record number of cases today, as reported on the news. The safety of our front line teachers, staff and kids who need in person learning is important. We can't guarantee safe schools with our classrooms at full capacity. Thank you for your consideration.
Lorie Johnson

Sent from my iPad

Concerns about covid-19 in the schools

Leslie and Michael McClintock <LeslieMikeMcClintock@msn.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 3:09 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Cc: "javgeris@mcpsmt.org" <javgeris@mcpsmt.org>, "gdecker@mcpsmt.org" <gdecker@mcpsmt.org>, "meholland@mcpsmt.org" <meholland@mcpsmt.org>, "dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org" <dlorenzen@mcpsmt.org>, "vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org" <vmcdonald@mcpsmt.org>, "kmercerc@mcpsmt.org" <kmercerc@mcpsmt.org>, "woldperson@mcpsmt.org" <woldperson@mcpsmt.org>, "ssterbis@mcpsmt.org" <ssterbis@mcpsmt.org>, "awake@mcpsmt.org" <awake@mcpsmt.org>, "jvogel@mcpsmt.org" <jvogel@mcpsmt.org>

Dear School Board Trustees,

We have a specific concern over the fact that MCPS is not releasing its daily or weekly Covid-19 count. The University of Montana reports its count daily. Why aren't the MCPS counts being similarly released? This is information that the community deserves to know and needs to know, especially for parents, grandparents, teachers, staff members, families, and the community.

We have seen that many other school districts in the state are complying with DHS's request that all K-12 schools with over 50 students report their case counts to DHS. UM is the only school from Missoula reporting as requested by the State. As MCPS is among the largest school districts in the state, we believe that we should certainly be complying too. Why wouldn't we be complying with that request? It is a matter of safety, transparency, and a good relationship with the community.

We have heard that there are 5 cases at Sentinel and that there are other active cases, but not how many or where they are. Not knowing this information for sure and hearing rumors ramps up the anxiety and fear. This is not fair, especially in an already stressful situation, to students, teachers, staff, families, and the community.

Our daughter-in-law teaches in an MCPS school. We worry that she will become infected with Covid-19 and also carry it home to our son. Both of them have pre-existing conditions and are in the demographic that has the largest percentage of Covid cases, many of whom become seriously ill or die when they get Covid. Thinking of that is a nightmare. They and our family are not alone in this.

Some of the testimony from teachers in the last couple of hearings is also troubling; for example, one teacher said that her lower elementary classroom has access to one sink that they share with more than one other classroom. Others have testified that it's impossible to keep the kids socially distant and, kids are being kids, prevent them from horsing around, taking off their masks, etc. One high school teacher said that the seniors she teaches leave the school during lunch, pile into cars, have lunch in big groups at fast food places, and then return to school. These are only a few examples of concerning safety issues.

Because of the decision to open the schools, we are no longer able to see them, and as we are in our mid and late 70's with health issues of our own, this makes it difficult for us because our son in particular was helping us with heavy lifting tasks that we can no longer do, so we're struggling with that. We are not unique. There are so many families with difficult circumstances. Transparency on the part of MCPS in terms of releasing the numbers would help.

We strongly believe that, given that the cases are higher than they've ever been in Montana, much higher than in March when the schools went to on-line learning, and that case numbers here and in the State are rapidly increasing daily, the District should at least pull back to phase I rather than going forward with the further opening plan as presented at the last board meeting.

10/2/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - Concerns about covid-19 in the schools

MCPS should also be required to submit a specific plan to the Health Department about how they will pull back to an earlier phase before moving forward as promised at the last board meeting. Have they provided the MCPS board and Health Department with that plan?

In addition, we very strongly believe that MCPS needs to report its case counts going forward, and we urge you as Trustees to make and pass a motion to make that happen at tonight's board meeting.

We have also written to the Health Department to ask them if they can insist on that.

Thank you. Leslie & Mike McClintock

Sent from Mail for Windows 10



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Hybrid Plus and numbers

Thea Varichak <varichak@hotmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 3:17 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Good Afternoon,

I am writing this afternoon to voice my concerns about the plan to move to the next phase of reopening our schools in Missoula. I have a 3rd grader at Lewis and Clark. We are happy to have her back in class, however, I think moving to the next phase, even delayed one week is dangerous and an unnecessary risk. At this point with the numbers rising, focus should shift towards making plans for the very likely possibility that our children, teachers and staff will need to be out of school again. Instead, it seems like we're planning to live-test whether or not an extended schedule might add immediate complications to something that, while working, is already stressful (and risky) enough. It is understandable to want to approach the realities of a pandemic with optimism, but it takes courage to act with pragmatism and realistic expectations about what a class-wide or school-wide outbreak really means as it potentially and willfully endangers the lives of students, teachers and staff. And is above-all, unnecessary at this time. The one thing that's really changed since school began is that there are hundreds *more* confirmed cases of Covid in our area. Lewis & Clark and other schools have done a terrific job managing and teaching through this. Learning is happening, children are enjoying school. Please let them continue to do so without adding more unnecessary stress.

Additionally, I am concerned about numbers that are not being reported. So far I have received three emails informing me of three cases of Covid at Lewis and Clark. I am NOT seeing this number reflected anywhere else, such as the numbers presented by Rob Watson via his email on Wednesday September 30th, nor in the numbers presented on the state-wide School Covid Report. Please address this.

I urge the Board of Trustees to delay the Hybrid plus model indefinitely and, rather than making plans that don't seem to be based on actual numbers, come up with plans on how to assist families if and when schools and other parts of the community close down in the near future, as it seems like a real possibility.

Thank you for your attention. I appreciate having the ability to communicate and voice my concerns.

Thank you,

Thea Varichak



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Hybrid plan

Rachel Kantor <patteecanyonoutdoorschool@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 4:01 PM

To: publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us, rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us

Dr. Watson and Board of Trustees,

I'm writing to ask that MCPS maintain our current phase and pause the plan to move into hybrid plus due to the increase in cases in the state and county, and within the school district. I'm concerned that MCPS does not have the staffing ability to move into the next stage, nor do I believe we have the capacity to maintain current safety measures if class sizes increase. Hand washing and distancing being the main concerns. Moving into the next phase would increase the burden on our community and place unneeded risk on teachers, staff and student's families. I understand the need and desire for academic progress, however it is not worth the risk to everyone's health and safety. We need to be taking into account the long term effects of a COVID infection, not just the death rate. So even though children generally have mild cases, with little long term effects, that is not the case with those older, and the burden these long term effects to individuals and our community is not worth rushing into the next phase.

Thank you for calling this meeting, and again, I urge you all to vote to stay in the current phase.

Thank you,
Rachel Kantor



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

MOA Parents

Jessie Thomas <junglejess79@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 4:06 PM

Bcc: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello there,

Please excuse the grammatical errors in the document (click here or see link below). I am the mom of young 2 MOA and don't have the time to polish as much as I wish I could. This is feedback from some MOA parents. I wanted to get this to you before the meeting tonight. I did not see MOA on the agenda. I am facilitating a different meeting at the same time as the MCSP board meeting however I will do my best to attend. I am aware right now the school system needs as much support as possible. Thank you for your leadership. I have BCC'd MCPS public comment email address in this email.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-XKDgN9VB7bWK6RPnMD4tjySrKMsCXIWY4H-DGJkibk/edit?usp=sharing>

Sincerely,

Jessie Thomas

www.sustainablewellness.net

Parent Communication/Feedback with MOA

MOA,

I would like to acknowledge what an incredibly challenging year this has been for parents, teachers, administrators, and school staff. It's nothing short of amazing what has been accomplished with such short notice. Parents and teachers have an important common goal: the future of the next generation. I don't need to inform anyone reading this that educational opportunities are the best, and sometimes only, way to ensure equality and human progress in society. Currently the public school system is under attack on a national scale. Teachers and parents are being asked to normalize things that are not normal and at the expense of our common goal. The following statements are consolidated from an MOA Facebook group where parents and learning supporters were asked what would create a better learning experience for them and their learners. Please read the following:

Students with IEP's

Many parents of students with IEP's stated that 4 weeks into the online school year, teachers had not been able to read their students IEP's thru sheer volume and teacher workload. Parents are requesting the district hire more people to support these families so they have the same opportunities. The district has a legal requirement to provide appropriate staffing for students with IEP's and 504's.

Live Zoom calls and more recorded lessons:

Parents are juggling multiple priorities and stretched thin in unsustainable ways. For most families, MOA is a choice based in the concern and safety of our families, community and teachers. Because parents are working, supporting their learners, and facing the additional responsibilities placed on them in our current system, we are asking for more flexibility and less attachment to Zoom calls where students, especially younger students, are being held accountable for attendance and important content delivered during the call. A parent of younger students cannot support two or more synchronous Zoom calls at the same time. We are asking that lessons such as math and ELA are recorded so students and learner supporters can pause and reference the instruction outside of a live call and on a schedule that accommodates the unique and full schedule of each family.

Duration/frequency of Zooms calls and general screen time:

Live Zoom calls and recorded instruction should be capped at 30 min or less and not to exceed 1 hour per day. Office hours and other optional forms of engagement are great ways to provide additional support for learners as needed. This provides students the opportunity to catch up if behind or get ahead if there is a planned absence.

Attendance information:

Parents are unclear about attendance requirements. Many families have various learning scenarios in place for their learners. Please communicate clear directions on what is required. Zoom call attendance has been universally identified as not providing families with the flexibility they need to accommodate their schedules and situations.

Zoom call addendum:

Some parents feel that the regularity of calls creates structure that is useful for their learner. A few parents also felt that some teachers were doing a great job connecting with and instructing learners. Those parents did not want changes to their zoom call duration or frequency and felt that if they did want changes the teacher was open to making adjustments therefore problems with Zoom or instruction could be handled between learner and teacher. Those parents were asked to name identify teachers doing an exceptional job connecting with and instructing students over Zoom or in pre-recorded formats. Those teachers were: Ms. Braun, Ms. Asay, Mrs. Sullivan, Sherrie Harris, Ms. Ensley, and Ms. Delany. A general statement was made about the middle school teachers organizing and working together to tackle the challenges this year presents. In middle school, Mr. Ihde and Mr. Cuttingham are specified as successfully connecting and engaging with their students. There are more teachers than listed who are meeting the needs of their students. There are some teachers that are not. Through naming successful teachers, it is this group's intent to help MOA support other teachers who need more Zoom training.

Consolidation of online materials for all grades:

Parents are asking that the number of applications, links, systems, (white/green for highschool) and portals be reduced and streamlined. It is a significant additional stressor placed on families to have to shift and sort through various links and applications to turn work in or find work that is due. The learning, homework, assignments, and assessments should stand alone as the learning experience, not finding or navigating the links and applications where they exist. Make schedules and learning objectives printable so parents and learners can have clear direction.

Parents of K-5 kids are asking for more handwriting assignments and less time completing assignments on a screen. Learners need to write on paper. Work can be turned in by taking a picture and sending the assignment to the appropriate place.

Provide students with opportunities to connect with each other during Zoom calls either through breakout rooms or other facilitated possibilities (like in place of Go Noodle Brain Breaks). The takeaway is that peer connections are vital to learning during normal circumstances. Choosing the MOA option has cut students off from their familiar peer groups and schools connections and placed them in a situation where fostering those connections is even more important. Learning in isolation is not a model of success for anyone. Teachers and staff need to not only recognize the need for connection but also find creative ways of addressing and meeting the need. Some teachers will need more coaching in the area than others.

To ensure equal opportunities, MOA families need more technology and online instruction/support. This document is intended to serve as a starting point for dialogue and joint problem solving. We need our teachers right now. Thank you for providing a safe option to learn and attend school. We appreciate you and the education you are working hard to provide. I apologize for not stating more of the positives. As COVID cases rise in the Missoula Valley,

parents are grateful to have this option. We appreciate the teachers and administrators who bailed in to create and get MOA off the ground in such incredibly challenging times and on such short notice. Those efforts are not lost on anyone. Please let the administration know that the services provided by MOA are vital to the success and safety of so many Missoula students. We need this to work. We want this to work and we are willing to do what it takes to support the process. We all are in this together.



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Request to freeze reopening and remain at current stage

Libby Steigers <lsteigers@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 5:12 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us" <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am writing to request that you freeze the reopening plan and remain at the current stage. With the increasing daily numbers of Covid cases setting record highs, I am asking you to not move forward with the plans to reopen further. I am a parent of a third grader at Lewis and Clark where there are three confirmed cases (to my knowledge) and I see no benefit in rushing the reopening schedule. I am concerned for the students as well as the teachers. We have acclimated to the current school schedule and I feel that remaining where we are gives us the best chance of remaining open and effectively tracking/monitoring cases.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,
Libby Steigers



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Moving to hybrid plus- my concerns

Michelle Thornblade <smwpac@hotmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 5:30 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Hi,

My children are in 8th grade at Washington Middle School and 10th at Hellgate HS. They are attending the hybrid model. Overall I feel they are pretty safe vis a vis Covid exposure because of the small class size and only having 2 classes. Being in school 2 days a week is so, so much better than not being there at all. They are learning and doing well in their classes so far.

I am very concerned about the rise in Covid cases in Missoula over the past month. I really do not want to double the number of days my kids are exposed to others in person. I really do not want their class sizes to double. I feel that will significantly increase our family's risk of exposure to Covid at this time.

Please reconsider moving up to hybrid plus until our case count and rate of transmission are much lower. I would hate for our school children to have more exposure or for them to contribute to community spread.

Thank you,
Michelle Thornblade PA-C

Sent from my iPhone

New case at Paxson, no to Hybrid Plus on Oct 19

Diego Bejarano <diego.bejarano@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 5:40 PM

Dear MCPS Board of Trustees, Rob Watson, and others:

As a parent of a 5th grade student at Paxson elementary, I ask you to strongly reconsider your plan to move forward with a Hybrid Plus model on Oct. 19th.

Today, sadly, I learned of the first case of COVID-19 at Paxson. If there is one case, there could be others. There are more cases in Missoula County today than there has ever been. We should be talking about moving back to Phase 0, not moving forward (or at least give the option for students attending school currently to enroll in the Online Academy). Obviously, even with the protocols in place at schools there is still risk to students and staff, and the more students and staff congregating will undoubtedly aggravate that risk.

Thank you.

Diego Bejarano

MISSOULA COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

keep schools hybrid - dont open up for full time yet while cases are spiking

Bronwyn Troutman <bronwyn.70@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 1, 2020 at 7:05 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Please support remote and hybrid learning!

We are not ready to go full time in person!

I have a daughter who goes to Hellgate High school and she is doing well in the hybrid model. She is actually thriving.

Going full time would not be wise considering all of the new cases in Missoula.

Thank you,

Bronwyn Troutman

return to full-time learning

Boni Rasmusen <brasmussen@montanapb.com>

Fri, Oct 2, 2020 at 8:19 AM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Good morning, I have read the decision to push switching full-time learning back further and further with each email from the Superintendent and wanted to let my opinion to return to full-time learning as soon as possible be known. I read a comment of from a person stating they had not found one person who feels that way and want to counter that with of the parents I know, I don't know one person who doesn't feel it is past time to return to a full-time learning module. If we had the option to homeschool our children we would have done so by now. We have seen little to zero teaching happening on remote days, more zero than little. I understand the circumstance was difficult and unforeseen at the end of 2019/2020 school year however, our kids are enrolled into the school's care for education. I feel you have a responsibility to provide them with that education. There has not been a single Zoom or other classroom experience on remote days to actually teach the kids first hand. Assigning work is not the same as teaching. However even work assignments have been lacking on remote days. On average 1 in 3 days of remote learning have there been any work assigned. I am less concerned with assignments given than actual teaching time, though at least it would still be something. On most remote days there is only attendance to complete and nothing more. Please reconsider continuing to push back the returning to full-time learning date any further.

Thank you.

Boni Rasmussen



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Delay reopening

Sara Clement <sara.clement1015@gmail.com>

Mon, Oct 5, 2020 at 12:56 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Please listen to the science and protect our teachers, our children and their families. Do not open schools at this time. Our numbers are getting higher every day. This is dangerous. Be on the right side of history.
Sara Clement

COVID information by school

Leary, Cindy <cindy.leary@mso.umt.edu>

Fri, Oct 2, 2020 at 2:06 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Dear Board of Trustees,

I appreciate all of the extremely hard work and tough decisions you are having to make right now. I am trying to keep this brief as I know that you have many comments & information to read through.

Now that we have a very large uptick in cases in our K-12 schools, I write to strongly urge you to work toward a more transparent case communication system. I just received a notice that there was "a case" at my children's school (Paxson), but have no idea of whether it was a teacher/student, or what grade, cohort, etc.... Furthermore, when I go to mcpsmt.org in an attempt to look up the case load in schools across the city, the most recent school data available are from 9/30/2020, and the link does not work (it points to the city data instead). I only learned about some recent Lewis & Clark cases today because I talked to a parent from that school, but this affects decisions I make over the weekend, for example attending our soccer game tonight. Why can't we make all of the cases update daily on the health department website just like UM does?

I also am not aware of how quickly I would expect a call should we be a close contact (I this is the health department and not you, but the email from MCPS just says that we will be contacted if we are a close contact.....but when?).

While I understand that there are many privacy issues to consider, there must be something more we can do to help disseminate this information so that parents have the most up-to-date information possible, and not rely on hearsay. I also don't like having to trust that one person's memory of a "close contact" wouldn't necessarily match with mine, and that a "close contact" classification could be based on unreliable sources of information. It seems that privacy could still be kept even while at least giving the grade and maybe the teacher(s) of the class containing the case. It could also be that the teachers/staff who are positive would want to share their name, and that you could give them the option of doing so.

Thank you for reading my email and considering these ideas as we move forward! I so appreciate your work for our students and can only imagine how hard this year must be.

Best,
Cindy Leary



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Back to school decision

Anna Noson <anna.noson@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Thu, Oct 8, 2020 at 9:02 AM

Dear Board Members,

I have held back from commenting because I believe you should listen to the advice of the school district and teachers, not the most vocal public. But, after your decision to delay full school for K-8 against their recommendations, I am writing to remind you that Hybrid was not meant to be a permanent school solution. I have two kids in school in Hybrid, and we were told the plan was to ramp up to full-time school to ensure safety protocols were working.

We can expect to see rising cases of COVID in the schools as cases rise in the community, but what is important is that there is NO EVIDENCE OF SPREAD in the schools. Please lay out a plan to return K-8 to full time learning.

Unsupervised remote learning for 3 days a week while teachers are in the class and unavailable is not working academically or providing needed childcare. Students mixing in multiple groups between school, sports, and childcare is potentially more dangerous than full time school with one group. To address public concerns, I urge you to:

- Give parents of K-8 students another chance to opt out of in-person school.
- Provide a clear plan for how you will respond to evidence of COVID spread in school.
- Be more transparent about COVID numbers including which schools and groups have cases (staff, sports teams, etc).
- Stop activities causing spread first, like sports, before sacrificing academics.

If schools cannot operate in person safely, please opt for 100% remote learning, and use the school buildings and staff to address the needs of vulnerable, high risk students, and students in need of childcare, rather than academics for all.

Thank you,
Anna Noson



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

COVID and MCPS Schools

Laurie Yung <laurie.yung@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, Oct 12, 2020 at 9:36 AM

Dear MCPS Board of Trustees,

I'm the parent of two Hellgate High School students. I'm writing to urge you to make decisions based on the *relative risk* of different activities, as well as the needs of different age groups.

High schools should remain in the current 2-day a week hybrid format. High school students are better equipped for remote learning, as compared with younger students, and they do not require supervision during remote learning days. High school students are also just as likely to spread COVID as adults. Please take these differences into account when making decisions.

High risk activities should be suspended immediately. Indoor sports, indoor PE activities, and bus trips (for sports or field trips) are much higher risk than classroom activities where students can be masked and socially distanced. Please suspend high risk activities to limit spread.

All families should be provided with options. In August, MCPS made a commitment to only return to full time school if COVID cases were declining. Returning to four days a week while cases are skyrocketing is a violation of that commitment, the social contract that parents agreed to when they signed their kids up for in-person schooling. If MCPS returns to a 4-day schedule while cases are still high, there must be an option for families to transition to online-only.

We need to provide more support for families who need childcare. Rather than rushing toward a transition to four days a week, I would urge the Board to consider prioritizing the needs of families who do not have access to childcare or whose children need to be in school full time. We can learn how to best do this by looking at innovations happening all over the country.

I realize you have an incredibly difficult job and I appreciate you considering these comments. Both of my kids are thriving in the 2-day a week hybrid model. Their teachers are providing meaningful and robust activities for the remote learning days. We are very happy with the current model, but do not support crowding more students into classrooms while cases are so high.

Sincerely,

Laurie Yung
