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**In Person School**

2 messages

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**sarah hickey** <sarahchickey@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Sun, Oct 18, 2020 at 8:38 PM

Dear Board,

I am writing to advocate for elementary students to be in school five days a week.

I have three kids in elementary school and they need to be in school more than two days a week. Children this young do not learn from packets and computers at home, they need to be in school with their teachers and peers actively engaging in their education. One of my kids has an IEP, and I can assure you, two days a week is not enough for her to get the help that she needs.

When my kids aren't in school, they are in camps three days a week because both my husband and I work outside of our home. How is it they can be in camp three days a week with counselors and kids from all over Missoula, in groups as large as 20, but they can't be with their same teacher and peers five days a week in similar group sizes? This makes absolutely no sense. My preschooler is in school five days a week, elementary school kids should be too. Our families and our schools are being exposed to more people than necessary under this current model. In fact, our family is currently in a two week quarantine because of an exposure to a counselor at their camp. I won't even get into the financial burden put on our family having to pay for camps three days a week.

If you look at the data, cases are not being driven by young kids or schools. Why are the schools being villainized and our children's education jeopardized? Our kids should be in school, with the same peers and teacher, five days a week. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Hickey

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**Public Comment** <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>  
To: sarahchickey@gmail.com

Sun, Oct 18, 2020 at 8:38 PM

Thank you for submitting your public comment. Just like comments made in person at a public board meeting, the comments you submit through email are public record and are available for any member of the Board and public to read. Please refrain from referring to confidential student or staff information, or making derogatory comments about students or staff members. If you do provide private confidential information, we will redact that information before placing it in any public document. Please refer to Board Policy 1441 for more information about public comments in general. Thank you!



Public Comment &lt;publiccomment@mcpsmt.org&gt;

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**Please move from hybrid to remote**

2 messages

**Alvin's Show** <sharistrachan@gmail.com>

Wed, Oct 14, 2020 at 12:22 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am writing to urge you to quickly move the hybrid classes to full remote through the end of the fall semester, and to begin open enrollment for a spring Online Academy. Our family has children in three schools, and we are at the point in this pandemic where we would like to have them learning from home. It is stressful for our family to look at the school calendar and see "TBD" three weeks from now, and to "not know" if the Online Academy will be open in the Spring. Two of the three schools our kids attend are having rising cases, and we do not want to keep them at-risk at school.

Initially, we had decided that we trusted the Board to make the right decisions with regard to school safety, but I have felt a growing unease, that is now becoming more of a desperate feeling, over your reluctance to move to the remote learning model despite the very real dangers for everyone involved with in-person learning. Please do the right thing and move us to remote through the end of this semester, with the online academy decision made for the spring.

Thank you,

Shari Strachan

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

Wed, Oct 14, 2020 at 12:22 PM

To: sharistrachan@gmail.com

Thank you for submitting your public comment. Just like comments made in person at a public board meeting, the comments you submit through email are public record and are available for any member of the Board and public to read. Please refrain from referring to confidential student or staff information, or making derogatory comments about students or staff members. If you do provide private confidential information, we will redact that information before placing it in any public document. Please refer to Board Policy 1441 for more information about public comments in general. Thank you!

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**Please keep elementary schools open for in-person learning**

2 messages

**Brianna Randall** <brianna.randall@gmail.com>

Wed, Oct 14, 2020 at 11:03 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear MCPS Board of Trustees,

First, I wanted to say THANK YOU for opening our schools this fall, and for working hard to keep them open.

As a working parent who values my kids' public school education — and who desperately needs time without kids underfoot to work to support my family — **I ask that you please continue to keep schools open for in-person learning, especially for elementary students.**

Only a very small minority of COVID cases have been documented in children under 10 — and these are the kids who most need in-person instruction. My kindergartner loves his class and teacher, but flounders during "remote learning" days since he can't work the computer himself.

As you've also read, the few student cases in our schools have come from extra-curricular activities rather than the classrooms themselves. This is thanks to you, the teachers and the administrators adopting great safety precautions, like small groups, masks and sanitizing.

However, without schools in session — and, honestly, with only 2 days of school for my child — it leaves parents struggling to find childcare the other days and kids looking for activities to fill all of the empty time. That leads to close contact with many other groups outside of school time. I believe it would be much safer to have kids in school more with the same group and with the excellent safety precautions, rather than having them shipped to after-care, camps, sporting events, and so on during remote learning days.

Please consider shutting down school sporting events, particularly indoor sports, before shutting schools themselves. Also, I hope you'll consider keeping elementary schools open even as cases rise in the county.

I appreciate your time as public servants, and value the work that goes into maintaining MCPS during this stressful pandemic. Thanks for listening, and for keeping our students safe!

Cheers,  
Brianna Randall  
Freelance Writer | BriannaRandall.com  
406.370.8388

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

Wed, Oct 14, 2020 at 11:04 AM

To: brianna.randall@gmail.com

Thank you for submitting your public comment. Just like comments made in person at a public board meeting, the comments you submit through email are public record and are available for any member of the Board and public to read. Please refrain from referring to confidential student or staff information, or making derogatory comments about students or staff members. If you do provide private confidential information, we will redact that information before placing it in any public document. Please refer to Board Policy 1441 for more information about public comments in general. Thank you!

**MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

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## **New/emerging information regarding the risks of remote school versus in person school**

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**Darci Coffman** <ddawnc@msn.com>

Fri, Oct 23, 2020 at 8:22 PM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

I wish you all the best as you decide our next steps.

Here is some information for your consideration regarding emerging science on the topic of weather the risk of having kids out of school is greater than the risk of having them in school.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/10/21/925794511/were-the-risks-of-reopening-school><https://www.npr.org/2020/10/21/925794511/were-the-risks-of-reopening-schools-exaggerated?>

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## To get students back to school ASAP we must follow metrics as a district and greater community

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Lindsay Manzo <lmanzo@mcpsmt.org>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Sat, Oct 24, 2020 at 9:01 AM

Once again, there are major issues not being addressed and I think it would build trust between the district, staff and community to have a little transparency. I also think that before any of you can help our community decide what to do during this ever expanding pandemic, they need to be clarified. Unfortunately, IF THEY ARE NOT BEING CLARIFIED THAT SEEMS INTENTIONAL -AND UNETHICAL. I know that there are at least two board members on the COVID task force, maybe they can explain some of what the task force has discussed about this in the 5 hours they have met.

1) The Covid task force has been asked to look at and come up with fair metrics (based on data) for making decisions about education during a pandemic. **Current metrics are not being used to actively make decisions - even though the task force has been looking at them for weeks.** Even North Dakota's Metrics point out that we have been in a situation FOR WEEKS where students should be doing at home learning because of our community numbers. Watson sent out these two yesterday: Harvard's metrics and the CDC metrics. Harvard also thinks we should be shut down (we are far beyond their shut down recommendation in numbers) and the CDC is categorizing us in second highest to highest level and our sports approach at the most high level.

So here is what I think needs to be clarified for all (especially for you decision makers) **If those metrics have been known for weeks, and our cases having been blowing past them for weeks, WHY ARE WE/HAVE WE BEEN IGNORING THEM when hospitals in town are at full capacity and numbers are growing beyond effective contact tracing control?** If the task force, the district and you all have decided to ignore all the data and all the metrics when we are in a huge uptick and spike in cases and hospitalizations for COVID - please tell us why.

2) **IF the health department and hospitals are (and have been for weeks) this stretched thin because of the extreme rise in the effect of the Pandemic - Why are these task force meetings not more productive and the issue treated with more urgency?** I appreciate what the task force members are doing for all of us. Even if I do not agree with them - I still think that they are doing what they think is best for students and are in a tough spot. I don't envy them and appreciate all of them for committing thier time and perspectives to our community (just as you all do). But there seems to be an issue with how productive these meetings are based on what these members are actually allowed to do and say in these meetings - especially balanced with how urgent these issues are. That being said - **75% of the meetings 1 hour entails a running clarification or explanation on a task these members were given in advance.** The

last amount is just for further clarification. If the rest of the officials in the community are treating this as a crisis, why are we not attempting to get more done with the little time people are meeting over it? I don't think they should rush their decision **BUT they have been looking at data and metrics that show we are in a crisis for weeks and are no closer to even a skeleton outline of OUR district's metrics and it is not the fault of the willing task force.** I am sure all of them from all perspectives would like to be able to make some productive progress.

**3) Why are we as a district treating younger students and older students the same? They transmit and interact differently - thier experience is different, thier development is different? **New Research/Data keeps pointing out that older students Transmit like adults even when they are asymptomatic.** Even pediatric/epidemiology experts who want students back in school like this group NY times: students seem unlikely to transmit (their policy/guidelines are here:policy) believe that we need to treat the educational experiences of older students in an even more precautionous way. **OUR METRICS SHOULD BE DIFFERENT FOR YOUNGER AND OLDER STUDENTS (just like our educational approach, laws, etc already are).** That being said, we should still have precautions in place to protect our elementary teachers - and with the metrics we are looking at compared to our current community case data - even they should not be in school OR move beyond hybrid at this point. **We should not ignore that ANY of our staff and teachers can still get sick from students of all ages and should be careful with these valuable community members.****

**4) Teachers have no options if they are forced into an unsafe pandemic situation by the district/board beyond quitting.** I have reached out before and let you all know that at least 4 of my department were asking to be in a remote teaching situation at the beginning of the year. **None of us were given an opportunity to EVEN WHEN THE MOA WAS DESPERATELY IN NEED OF MORE SCIENCE TEACHERS.** We asked why and were not given a reason beyond our initial rejection. We also were not allowed to telecommute. We are considered too healthy to qualify for the government 3/4 pay subsidy for taking leave for the short time you can do that as well. Essentially we are left with the option of quitting the jobs we put 60 hours into every week because we want our students to thrive OR working in a situation where we are actively risking our safety and our family's safety. What if you all ignore the CDC's metrics and every other health expert's metrics and we are still asked to work with students who are transmitting the virus and leaving it in our schools (remember it is airborne and lingers - the CDC has researched and proven this CDC) during lunch or when they are working out? What choice beyond quitting do teachers have? Imagine that in a middle of an increasing pandemic you all were required to meet in person for your board meetings? That is nothing compared to the hours we spend in schools with way more transmitting humans.

**5) WHAT WILL HAPPEN with all schools SECOND SEMESTER? How can our task force make metrics without knowing details about the number of students in schools and the modes that will be offered to them. Questions like...**

- Is the MOA going away or changing drastically from what we know it to be at this time (Federal Cares money has not been renewed at this point)?
- Will there still be an online option for students who do not feel safe at school?
- Will our class sizes increase because students plan on coming back in person?
- Will this transition mean more changes for the curriculum developed by in person teachers (who are already overworked) like teaching more kids but some online and some in person on the same day?
- If students with CSCT or IEP or 504 support need extra help - how can we think outside the box to give them even more help in whatever modes we offer? Will that mean online kids with these needs in school (more bodies in school)?
- What is our plan for elementary? Junior High? High School?
- Will we continue to encourage our students to participate in sports that take place inside with students not wearing masks and in close contact sharing the same air circulation for hours if things get worse?

I hope you all know - that for teachers and parents and community members, government officials, health professionals who have an understanding of epidemiology, nations, and people like myself who are still concerned about COVID spread - the goal is that it ends ASAP. **The goal is not to make a big deal where others are not. The goal is to end this as soon as possible so that our students can have healthy lives and educational experiences sooner than later.** The longer we draw this out with indecision or draw this out with compromises that encourage further community spread - the longer we stay in less effective educational models.

**I don't want to teach half my students half the time for any longer than I need to. I despise this educational model and don't think it is nearly as effective as what we can normally do for our students, but I completely understand why we are doing it.**

**I also in NO WAY think we should shut down schools for the year and commit to that. I do think we should watch the data - and do what we need to do as the cases grow or retract WITH TRANSPARENT INFORMED METRICS so that all know what to expect.** Students, staff, parents, the community, doctors, ALL OF US have been in a perpetual state of unknowing and transition - and that is not ok. How do you determine child care if you do not know what will happen? How do you prepare for your educational experience if you do not know if you will be at home, partly at home, in one kind of class for 12.5 hours per week (that is a lot of Science in one week!) or 10 hours or 5? How can students prepare if they don't know if they will have two classes at a time, 3? 7? 6? What time will school start? When will my students get the bus? Can my student walk thier younger sibling to school or not?

**I cannot wait until all my students are back frequently and consistently so I can try to help them learn and thrive and become even more scientifically capable humans --- but it is not worth prolonging this virus in our community and putting people at risk and whatever we decide should be set forth in a clear metrics based path so the whole community is in the know.**

10/26/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - To get students back to school ASAP we must follow metrics as a district and greater community

20x 30x

Lindsay Manzo

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Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## Increase days of in-person learning

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L Hayhurst <lhayhurst@gmail.com>

Sat, Oct 24, 2020 at 10:21 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear MCPS Board of Trustees:

At the outset, we would like to express our appreciation for your leadership during these particularly difficult times. There are no easy choices. We have not given public comments to this point, but feel strongly about providing our viewpoint now.

The school district should, to the fullest extent possible, get kids back in school 5 days per week, for those families that elect the option. The experience of Hellgate School District right here in Missoula, along with the Billings school district, proves that kids can be in school full-time – or nearly full-time – and do so in a manner that is reasonably safe for both kids and staff. Our kids are lagging farther and farther behind, and that is particularly true of younger kids (elementary and even middle school) who face more difficult challenges with remote learning. Our high school student, for example, has done better during these times than our younger kids. And that's no surprise, since it's often much harder for younger students to focus and learn remotely.

For years and years, educators have stressed the risks of learning loss over a 3-month summer period. At this point, we are now more than 7 months into Covid. The learning loss over this time must be staggering. We are seeing that in our home first-hand. Academic learning is just one facet, there is also the social and emotional benefit to being in a school environment and with peers more regularly, to say nothing of those students who depend on the meals provided at school.

We urge you to follow the lead of other districts in Montana who have successfully implemented a 5-day in-person schedule for those who elect it. We recognize the school days may need to remain shortened, and that some groups (like high school) may be treated differently. But the importance of in-person learning for younger kids justifies this change - and experience has proven it can be done safely, right here in Montana.

With many thanks,  
Matt & Lisa Hayhurst

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Public Comment &lt;publiccomment@mcpsmt.org&gt;

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## Return to School

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Jason Schaefer <jason.d.schaefer@gmail.com>

Sun, Oct 25, 2020 at 5:39 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Cc: Robert Watson &lt;rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us&gt;, Alana Schaefer &lt;alanaschaefer@gmail.com&gt;

Board of Trustees - I'm writing this letter to inform you of my desire along with our family's desire to have our kids back in attendance beginning November 9th.

We have a kindergartner, 4th grader and 6th grader in the district. The lack of structure, especially for our younger children in the district, has to be having profound effects. We as a family are handling this, however, it is NOT easy.

### REASONS to return:

1. Structure for children. Structure for families that might have parents working opposite 8-5 shifts.
2. Mental health and well being for all children.
3. Safety for our children who may be in an abusive/drug addicted/alcohol addicted household.
4. Structure for parents. Structure for the single moms or dads who are raising a child or children. Structure for grandparents who may be raising grand children.
5. You cannot convince me that children are safer at the YMCA or Park and Rec than they are in our schools. You cannot convince me that our children are safer at daycares than in our public schools. You cannot convince me that our children are safer on the streets than in our public schools.

We have school districts all around us attending full-time. Hellgate School District, Frenchtown, Lolo, Florence, Stevensville, Hamilton, Corvallis. What makes MCPS and our district so much different than these others?

Dr. Watson was chosen as our leader by you all. He's been a great leader throughout this all. Why are we NOT trusting our leader who is ready to have kids back in school 4 days a week? Why hire him in the first place if all you're going to do is go around his leadership? I've mentioned in the past to Dr. Watson this - in life as leaders what we do is give people options. He and district leadership have done exactly that - IF for whatever reason a family does not feel comfortable sending their child/children to school - that is totally fine. I 100% respect their decision as parents/guardians. But there are a VERY large majority of people in our own network who WANT our children back in school. Please trust our leader!

Trustee Vogel mentioned in a board meeting a few weeks ago about her sons attending high school, and working to remote learn in Potomac where the internet is not all that great. Plus she and her husband are both working full time jobs. How many countless other examples can there be within our district where there are variables like this? How many other countless examples in our district are there where we have children whose safety, structure, and well being is at school due to their home life? I am greatly concerned for this population and you should be too because this is OUR community.

My wife and myself implore you to stay the course of returning **November 9th**. We cannot continue to hide from this all - the **ONLY** way we're going to fully get rid of it is if we all go up in the mountains and dig caves. I don't think that's possible.

Thank you for your time.

Jason

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Jason Schaefer  
jason.d.schaefer@gmail.com  
406-493-4262

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Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## MCPS Covid Response

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Erin Gilder <eringilder@gmail.com>

Sun, Oct 25, 2020 at 8:33 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, rwatson@mcpsmt.org

Good Evening,

I am writing tonight to urge the Board to set a date in the very near future for our students to enter into the Hybrid Plus phase. I am a former teacher in the district, now a Private Reading Specialist, and a mother of four boys, three of which attend Jeannette Rankin. The strain that the hybrid model has put on our family is multifaceted and very detrimental to our family.

My boys, none of whom have learning challenges, are all falling behind. Our teachers are doing all they can but remote learning is busy work. It is a waste of everyone's time. My children have grown to dread school. For the two days they do attend, they are getting bare essentials but not getting to do the activities that make school fun. I am teaching my children at home but with a two year old also at home, it is difficult to say the least. The gaps in learning that are occurring in even the best of students is something that will affect their entire educational career. Teachers are following their grade level curriculum and not going back to reteach last year's skills that were missed. We are building up students on shaky foundations.

I have very little time for my own work thus, the financial burden on our family is monumental.

Many, many districts in much larger metropolitan areas have been able to have their student's return full time.

I hope the board can take into account the thousands and thousands of families who are being negatively affected by this schedule that is feeling less and less temporary as the year goes on.

Sincerely,  
Erin Gilder

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Public Comment &lt;publiccomment@mcpsmt.org&gt;

## Return to School

Jaclyn Sundberg <jsundberg@kw.com>

Sun, Oct 25, 2020 at 9:42 PM

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

Cc: watson@mcpsmt.org, Tyler Solberg <tasolberg@mcpsmt.org>, Christina Stevens <cmstevens@mcps.k12.mt.us>, publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear MCPS School Board of Trustees,

We are writing to ask that on Tuesday when presented with the school schedule, it is imperative that you vote YES to send our children back to school in a Hybrid Plus Model. To say we were disappointed that a Hybrid Plus schedule was not going to be implemented like the "original plan" is an understatement. We are now two months into the school year and the holes in the system are showing. **We are failing our children.** Not only are they behind in school, but the mental and social effects are taking their toll.

Why are you not listening to the experts? Dr. Watson was chosen to lead our district, and you must let him do his job. Trust in his leadership, just as you should trust in our medical experts that recommend a normal school schedule is what is best.

We are surrounded by other districts that are going full-time, yet due to the zip code we live in, we at MCPS are going two days a week? Someone explain to me what makes the MCPS children and teachers any different than the rest of our community.

We will be no better off with Covid in November than we will be in December than we will be in January or February. Until we have a vaccine this situation isn't going anywhere and I think we can all agree on that. The schools have proven that they can manage and the systems are now in place to go back to school in a hybrid plus model. We need to listen to the science and the experts, not our own emotion.

I want the following questions answered if you are planning on voting against a hybrid plus model on Tuesday:

- Have you considered the emotional and financial toll this is taking on the families of MCPS?
- How are we allowing sports to be played, which mixes children from many schools and districts together, yet still only going to school two days a week?
- What is the state/federal mandate of how many hours children must be in school to pass their respective grade?
- How are we planning on making up these hours/days?
- Will our children and teachers be attending school in the summer?
- Is there talk of our students repeating their current grade?

We understand that the Hybrid Plus Model may not be the right fit for ALL MCPS families. As you know, that is why the MOA was created and the options were clearly outlined to ALL families prior to the start of school. It was stated from the start that the plan was to get our children back to school and if families were not comfortable with that option, the MOA was the solution. Now we have let voices full of emotion and fear cloud our judgement and the result is a stunted student population that is worse off with each passing day.

10/26/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - Return to School

We can get this back on track! Do right by our children and our community. Please vote to get our children back to school on Tuesday.

Concerned Parents,

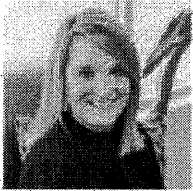
Jaclyn and Greg Sundberg

**JACLYN SUNDBERG**

Team Leader/CEO



kw KELLER WILLIAMS



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1209 South Reserve St. Suite 2  
Missoula, MT 59801  
jsundberg@kw.com



Each Office is Independently  
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## School needs to be in session

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Faith Meusey <faithmeusey@gmail.com>

Mon, Oct 26, 2020 at 12:18 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear MCPS Board of Trustees,

I am emailing you again as my concerns grow about the importance of getting our children back to a Hybrid Plus Model. Please vote in favor of opening the schools back up tomorrow. Missoula County Public School children are falling more and more behind every day they are not in school! Don't our children deserve better?

If we take the fear factor out of our emotional response to this pandemic, and look at the science based on information from experts, there is no good reason for our schools not to be open full time!

While voting tomorrow I respectfully urge you to think of the following:

What is best for children in uncertain/harmful environments due to any abuse, addiction, living in poverty, etc.? School is often a safe haven for them during their day, where they can rely on stability, routine, warm meals, guidance, encouragement, counseling, and EDUCATION, clothing and supplies if needed? With winter here, kids living in unstable and unpredictable living situations need Hybrid Plus model more than ever now!!

These kids have been out of school full time since March. The amount of learning they have missed is alarming. My husband and I have both seen our two son's loss of progress with math. **THEY DESERVE BETTER.** The amount of emotional support that is absent with the enforcement of social distancing and mandated masks is concerning. Kids need to see their teachers warm smiles. We are desensitizing them with lower emotional support, controlling where they sit at lunch, whom and where they play at recess....**THEY DESERVE BETTER!**

My 5th grader is not allowed to play a musical instrument at school this year. Again, a huge loss to him as music is such an important part of learning and developing other skills.

So much has been taken away from these children. Field trips, school assemblies, sports and other activities, **THEY DESERVE BETTER!!**

Why is it ok for hundreds of children to congregate at the YMCA and Parks and Rec after school programs and camps in large numbers, yet MCPS is only going two days a week currently?

If you look around the state of Montana MOST counties are in school full time. My brother has three children in Billings Public schools in Yellowstone County that is a "hot spot" for case counts. They have been in school **FULL TIME** with **REGULAR HOURS** since the beginning of the year. Look around Missoula County and take note that many other schools are on a regular schedule. If MCPS doesn't get back on a Hybrid Plus model, we most likely are sending our boys to a private schooling option next January.

We have established alternative avenues for families that feel it is not safe for their children to be at school with a complete online option. Doesn't that speak volumes about the families that are choosing in person learning? **WE WANT OUR CHILDREN BACK IN SCHOOL!**

Please consider the amount of stress and added work this puts on parents, grandparents, guardians, etc. not having schools open in the Hybrid Plus model. Working and nonworking aforementioned people are adjusting to teaching their children at home, scrambling for child care, juggling and balancing work and home schooling, worrying about our kids falling behind, it is not easy! I personally have so much respect for teachers! I believe teachers should be teaching these kids, not myself!

We are in uncertain times. The virus is not going away. It is here, and it is real. We need to think of our children and what is really best for them. They deserve the best education we can give them. They should not be shorted because there are some people living in fear. Please, look at the science, and listen to the guidance of Dr. Watson.

We appreciate your time and consideration to vote YES for the Hybrid Plus!

Concerned Parents,  
Faith & Matt Meusey

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**Please consider the hybrid-plus model, a letter from seven families**

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Kate Pruitt Chapin &lt;kspruitt@yahoo.com&gt;

Mon, Oct 26, 2020 at 4:11 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" &lt;publiccomment@mcpsmt.org&gt;

Dear Missoula County Public Schools' Board of Trustees,

We commend the efforts of the administrators, teachers and staff of Missoula County Public Schools who have worked tirelessly to educate and support our students in the midst of these unprecedented times. As parents of elementary and middle school students currently engaged in hybrid learning, we appreciate the challenges you've endured to keep our kids learning during the pandemic. As working parents navigating the challenges of meeting our professional commitments and our children's remote education, we write this letter to share our appreciation and to ask you to consider implementing the hybrid-plus model.

These times are unsettling, and we know parents and school staff are concerned about the uncertainty of in-person schooling and the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks. We share the concern of overextending healthcare facilities and exposing our most vulnerable community members. However, even with these concerns, we urge you to consider the data when making your next decision. Promising research reveals that schools are not the super-spreaders that we feared. In fact, when appropriate safety measures such as mask wearing and social distancing are in place, the research suggests transmission within schools is quite low and that reopening schools makes no difference in community spread (Kamanetz, 2020; Oster, 2020).

While county rates of COVID-19 are increasing in Missoula, the comparative rates per school remain low. Schools are able to mitigate risks via mask-wearing, social distancing, and keeping classrooms clustered. This is in contrast to in-home learning where hired caretakers and family members do not necessarily enforce similar precautions. In fact, the highest rates of transmission in children appear to be in home contacts with an adult as the index patient (Deville et al., 2020). Research also shows that children ten and younger have a lower risk of becoming symptomatic and data show that they have a lower rate of transmission (Deville et al., 2020; Oster, 2020).

Additionally, we worry about the impacts of limited schooling for our most vulnerable families. While COVID presents health risks to our community, increased isolation, barriers to accessing food, supportive learning assistance, and mental health care, and the financial and logistical impacts on working families with and without job flexibility also impact the health and wellness of children and families.

We ask MCPS to consider strategies adopted by other communities:

- Identify a threshold metric specific for schools or classrooms versus relying on data related to community spread. We know zero cases in schools is not realistic. Has the school board determined what is an acceptable threshold for infection? Ten percent? Twenty percent? Having this threshold in place allows families to determine if their risk level is in line with that of the schools or if they prefer to enroll in the Missoula Online Academy.
- Return elementary students, who are lower transmitters, to in-person schooling first.
- Consider plexiglass partitions around desks when increasing class size.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kate and Ryan Chapin, Rattlesnake Elementary and Washington Middle School

Danielle and Austin Chapin, Rattlesnake School

Meaghan and Alejandro Veliz, Paxson Elementary

Stephanie and Josh Lauer, Rattlesnake Elementary

Jen and Patrick Molloy, Lowell Elementary and C.S. Porter Middle School

Alysha Goheen, Rattlesnake Elementary

Jennifer and Martin Oakland, Rattlesnake Elementary

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*Schools Aren't Super-Spreaders*





**MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

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## No More Hybrid School

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**Theresa Cole** <supert3030@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, Oct 26, 2020 at 8:40 PM

Dear Board of Trustees,

My name is Theresa Cole. My daughter, Allie Berger, is an eighth grader at C.S. Porter Middle School. I would like to see our kids back at school full time. My daughter has struggled greatly with anxiety and depression since the quarantine began. She has subsequently been in counseling and placed on antidepressants. I believe that our kid's mental health and education are suffering because of the restrictions placed upon us do to Covid-19. Please consider going back to full time school like the schools in our surrounding communities.

Sincerely,  
Theresa Cole

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## Return to school

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amiemm98@gmail.com <amiemm98@gmail.com>

Mon, Oct 26, 2020 at 8:56 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, javgeris@mcpsmt.org, gdecker@mcpsmt.org, nhobbins@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: amiemm98@gmail.com, jace.schillinger@gmail.com

To Whom It May Concern,

This is a letter to the Missoula County Public School system, Board Members, Administrators and Superintendent of MCPS regarding student return to school.

As a parent with three children within the MCPS district, it is essential that our kids return to school! They are missing out on quality, in-class learning opportunities with teachers, peers and friends. Our children learn best when in a structured school environment. They are craving the structure of school and socialization. Are they doing just fine with the hybrid model, yes, but this is far from optimal. My husband and I are very concerned about their lack of structured school environments. Our children are completing their at-home assignments and modules, worksheets and reading assignments, however it is not with any amount of ease or excitement for learning; it is out of pure parent driven "guidance" if you will. There is minimal fun to their at-home learning anymore. They have grown to hate the idea of having to sit down and complete their work before play is allowed. Teachers are trained to interact with kids in a positive manner and kids learn to love and respect their teachers. Many parents are not teachers. My husband however, is a teacher. He is an excellent teacher and coach, however at-home learning from dad is completely different that in school learning from their teacher.

Our Kindergarten is missing out on one of the most fun years of school. She is so sad when it is not a "school day" because she has so much "more fun" at school than she does learning at home. Our third grader is missing his friends something fierce. He loves his teacher and loves to read at school however, he is learning to despise reading at home as it is being forced upon him by parents who are trying to do the right thing during the trying times of this pandemic. Our sixth grader is maneuvering through technology better than I, a health care provider, could ever dream of, but it is in social isolation, during one of the most critical times of brain development, craving any amount of socialization with peers during her pre-teen years.

We are blessed because we have three smart children without any type of learning disabilities or delays. We have motivated children who know their expectations both at home and at school. We are two full-time working parents, making this hybrid learning during a socially isolating pandemic work. We have all of the supplies and technology we need at home. We have a warm, comfortable home and a pantry full of food. Many children have none of what I just mentioned. My children are doing "just fine" and we have, essentially everything we need to make "this" work. I cannot imagine how children with disabilities, single parent homes, dysfunctional homes, no homes, no technology, no food to eat other than what they can get at school are getting by. Again, as a health care provider, it is my personal and professional opinion that kids need to be back to school to thrive, develop and learn.

Of course I understand in-school learning poses more of a virus threat. However, if we continue to work hard with masking, hand hygiene and distancing/small groups as we have been I feel that the spread will be minimal and in fact, most likely to occur at events that are outside of school, as has already been demonstrated.

10/27/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - Return to school

My kids and, I think most kids, have not blinked an eye about wearing a mask. Most are simply happy to be in school and with friends and teachers, too busy to notice they are even wearing a mask. Not once have my children every said a negative word about wearing a mask. I do NOT think wearing a mask is even a debatable issue anymore.

Could it be an option to choose return to full time school, hybrid or all remote learning. I understand this would be an issue for instruction and filling teaching positions for all of this but could it be a possibility?

I am pleading with you, as a parent of three children who so badly want and need to return to school- please consider this letter carefully during your decision making.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Amie Schillinger

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**MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## Reopen schools please

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**Lindsey Smith** <lindsey\_smith12@yahoo.com>

Mon, Oct 26, 2020 at 9:47 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Cc: rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us

To the Missoula public school board:

I have a 9 year old son and a 7 year old daughter that attend Janette Rankin Elementary. I am a nurse at St Patrick hospital. I can understand the concern for teachers to attend more days and the risk for more exposure to Covid, believe me, it is the same concern I have everyday I go to work as a nurse BUT just like nurses took the oath the help those in need with their health, I feel teachers have a similar oath to hold for our kids' education. After much review of Covid statistics, I think it is in our kids best interest to increase their in school days to 4 days per week. My kids not only need more in person education from their wonderful teachers, they need to socialize with their friends for their mental health.

Thank you for you time,  
Lindsey Smith

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

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## Classroom concerns

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From: **Peggy Chilcote** <busyladymt@msn.com>

Date: Tue, Oct 27, 2020 at 4:37 AM

Subject: Classroom concerns

MCPS School Board Members,

I am sending in this email because I am unable to attend the meeting. My family and numerous people I have spoken to are very concerned about the pandemic. With the numbers higher than when school started it would be dangerous to increase the number of students in a classroom. My daughter has fears about the classroom sizes increasing possibly as to a lot of her teachers. The classroom sizes are not able to keep a 6 foot distance between the students with the higher numbers of students that would be attending the classes. If the MCPS votes to return the students to a all attend the same day type schedule I hope the option is offered for distance-learning so we are not putting our children at risk due to the larger population in a classroom and the inability to keep the 6 foot social distancing between students. We need to do everything we can to show the students the seriousness of social distancing. The community needs to be proactive in stopping the spread.

Peggy Chilcote

Sent from my iPhone

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

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## Children in school

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**Patrick Carls** <patrick@montanaburgersinc.com>

Tue, Oct 27, 2020 at 8:52 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear MCPS School Board Members,

As parents of a second and fourth grader we have growing concerns with where this school year is headed. I know what I want to say, has been said, and I do not want to waste anymore time by sending a 10 paragraph email. Bottom line is our kids need to be in school for the educational, social, and mental development it provides. As a business owner we understand the constraint this virus has put on us but we cannot let it control our lives. We need to understand it, learn from it, and adapt. Our kids are our future and they need a classroom environment with peers and a teaching professional. If that cannot be provided; then we really need to think about what an hour of online schooling in a kitchen, with limited access to a learning device, on spotty internet connectivity with 2 fulltime working parents is going to do to their social, mental, and educational well being.

Thank you for your time and please consider our request to get our children back in school.

Patrick Carls  
Montana Burgers Inc.  
A Five Guys Burgers and Fries Franchisee(Montana and E. Washington)  
509-991-9663

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Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## MCPS Full Time

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**Katie O'Reilly** <koreillymt@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 27, 2020 at 9:38 AM

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

Hello Board of Trustees,

I am writing to you today to express my vote in returning to school full time for MCPS! I have three children in 7th, 5th and 3rd grade. They are all good students and have always enjoyed school, so even for them calling the current hybrid model challenging would be an understatement. Every week I fear they are falling further behind, both academically and emotionally. My 2nd grader is now associating homework with tears and anxiety as she struggles to get through every piece of remote learning! We do our best to complete all remote learning assignments and know that their teachers are putting in extra effort and doing the best they can. However, it just is not up to the standards that we hold as a part of MCPS. Our kids are the ones losing during this pandemic.

Other major concerns about the current hybrid school schedule include providing a safe, effective learning environment for kids living in households with no technology or internet available. The burden and extra stress the hybrid models puts on working families. The COVID exposure to the community as families need extra child care and need to go outside their immediate family to find. Just to name a few...

For me and my family, the concerns related with the hybrid school model far outway the concerns of elementary and middle school kids transmitting the coronavirus. I know you, as a board, try your best to make decisions based on what's best for the community. As a whole, I strongly believe full time education for the kids of MCPS is the best decision.

Thank you for your time in reading my email, as well as your time devoted to the Board of Trustees for MCPS.

Sincerely,  
Katie O'Reilly

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Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## School for our kids

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**Lisa castle** <lisaogren@yahoo.com>

Tue, Oct 27, 2020 at 10:55 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

To the board of trustees,

Please, please, please put our children in school full time. I have two kids that are not getting the full education they deserve and they are not getting the full childhood experience they deserve. You only get to be young and receive and education once! We are putting the fears of some above the future of our entire youth. Prolonging this will only leave our children with out a full education instead of learning and enacting a way to live with this virus that is here to stay. Other countries and even our own surrounding areas have gone to school full time with masks and have had little trouble. Although cases have risen, we really need to focus on the death rate which is minimal. There was a time when the majority ruled, now it seems, the minority is effectively ruining the lives of everyone. Please, school board, make the right choice for the majority and give our children a full education! Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

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Public Comment &lt;publiccomment@mcpsmt.org&gt;

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**(no subject)**

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**Ericka Schillinger** <ericka.schillinger@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 27, 2020 at 12:29 PM

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" &lt;publiccomment@mcpsmt.org&gt;

Dear MCPS Board of Trustees,

When given the option to send our child back to school with in person instruction or enroll in the MOA, we outlined the risk/benefit ratio for our family. Our decision to send our child to in person learning remains the same today.

While I understand that online learning may be equally effective for high school students, it is not conducive to learning for elementary aged children.

The largest elementary school in Missoula, as well as larger school districts within the state have opened their schools full time and a vast majority have been able to keep them open. We do believe that safety needs to be at the forefront of schools being open, but there has been ample time to implement plans/procedures (other schools had them in place in August) to mitigate the risk for students and staff even with all students that have opted for in person learning present.

Additionally, it is my understanding that smaller cohorts have been implemented for safety, and accessibility to contract tracing and is the primary focus of the hybrid model. Currently, numerous elementary children have working parents/caregivers who cannot stay home with them during the week. This means almost all the small cohort groups across MCPS have the potential for "cross contamination" with students from other classes, grades and schools, as parents try to shuffle their children from daycares to camps to preschools, so on and so forth. I believe there will be less exposure if the same set of children are in the same setting 5 days/week versus one place 2 days/week and multiple settings the other days.

We, as parents, are the voice for our children, and watching my child regress academically is not something I can sit back and watch silently. As a healthcare professional, my job is essential, but so is a quality education for my child, and she is simply not getting that with only 2 days per week of in person instruction.

I ask that you please consider this when deciding what model of learning will take place moving forward on November 9.

Sincerely,

Ericka Schillinger

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**Special Education- Back to School**

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**Meghan Green** <meghangreen33@yahoo.com>

Tue, Oct 27, 2020 at 6:32 PM

Reply-To: Meghan Green &lt;meghangreen33@yahoo.com&gt;

To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" &lt;publiccomment@mcpsmt.org&gt;

To whom it may concern,

I'm sure this won't get in the right hands before the school board meeting tonight, but I still wanted to share, even though short, rushed, and not as well worded as I would have liked.

First off, thank you for all your hard work in helping to make our schools safe over the past few months. It is incredibly appreciated.

I am writing to share with you my family's experience with having to be in complete remote learning in the Spring and hybrid learning this Fall. I have a 5th grade daughter, diagnosed with autism, who is in Extended Resource (special education). The lack of socialization and direct support has impacted her tremendously. While her academics weren't horribly affected in the spring, it was only because her grandparents were able to help, as I had a new baby and a preschooler. But, socially, an area in her life that we, her teachers and paraprofessionals, have worked so hard on for the past few years, went downhill. She created a whole new world, did not "see" anyone else in front of her, and started talking to herself and "others" who don't exist. Since she wasn't around anyone anymore, "they" became her friends. Regardless of how much we tried to redirect and intervene, they were her new reality. I am probably not conveying the severity of this new behavior. But it was very concerning her us, her parents and others who know her.

Once school started back in the hybrid model, we saw that behavior slightly decrease. But, now that she has been back in school 4 days a week, we, as well as her teachers and paras, have seen this behavior dramatically decrease. It is amazing what social interaction, as well as help from trained professionals, can do for ones mental health!

There are plenty of other reasons why I am "for" our children being back in school. But seeing how much my daughters life was negatively impacted by being secluded, and how quickly going back to school has helped, is the one thing I wanted to share.

I can only imagine the struggles that so many others have been and are currently dealing with. We know the risks of sending them to school during this time. But, there is a reason why people (like our family) did not choose the online academy. Our kids need their teachers, their specialists (speech, OT, psychologists, etc), and their peers more than just 2 days a week. We feel confident in our schools and the way they have been handling the safety of our children. But will also accept responsibility if our children do get sick. But, it's also my responsibility to fight for my children to receive the help they need-academically, socially, and emotionally.

Again, thank you for all you do. And thank you for listening.

Meghan Green

(5th graders and kindergartener)

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

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