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**RE: It's time to go back to school full time**

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**Greg Browning** <gregbrowning@outlook.com>  
To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Fri, Nov 20, 2020 at 10:34 AM

Even the CDC is now saying the safest place for kids to be is in school. There is no excuse for this ongoing hybrid model.

Please listen to your community and get our kids back in class.

Sincerely,

Greg Browning  
5111 Victor Place  
Missoula, MT 59803

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**From:** Greg Browning  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 28, 2020 12:59 PM  
**To:** publiccomment@mcpsmt.org  
**Subject:** It's time to go back to school full time

Dear Board of Trustees,

I'm writing to voice my concern over the current remote learning model. I firmly believe we need to get our students back in school full time. I'm in no way trying to denigrate the hardworking teachers who are doing their best in an untenable circumstance, many of whom have children of their own. On a typical day, my son finishes his schoolwork in ~30 minutes. I'm worried he is not getting a full education and think this remote model is harming, not helping, our students. We need to learn how to live with this virus.

Sincerely,

Greg Browning  
5111 Victor Place  
Missoula, MT 59803

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## Hybrid school schedule

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**Melissa Cotter** <cotter.mel@gmail.com>

Fri, Nov 20, 2020 at 12:29 PM

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

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am a nurse working in Missoula. I have two young children, a second grader and a preschooler at a Montessori preschool. My family and I are struggling through this pandemic, as all families are. I would like to share with you my growing disappointment with the decisions made by the School Board. As many child psychologists and pediatricians have warned, the hybrid model is causing enormous stress for our children, and perpetuating and increasing educational disparities. Our decisions have consistently demonstrated that our children's health and education is not as important as ensuring bar, restaurant, and gym patronage. The message has been that bars are essential, but not elementary school, which is shameful.

From the start of the pandemic, my children have struggled with stress, loss, and sadness regarding all of the changes in their daily lives, most importantly the loss of school. This morning my preschooler threw a twenty minute tantrum when I started getting her dressed for school. She was upset that she doesn't get to stay home all day with her older sister. No matter how you explain it to a four year old, they cannot understand why they are lucky to be able to go to school, when they see that their sibling gets to stay at home all day.

I have been working from home one day a week with my second grader, while her father has been working from home the other two days. Every remote learning day, she ends up in tears, crying about how much she misses school and how unfair this is for children. No matter how I try to explain it to her, she and I know that it is unfair. Recently we have been able to enroll her in Parks and Rec programs two days per week. She is happy to be out of the house and around her peers. We enrolled her into these camps out of necessity, though we know that it comes with a greater risk of exposure than if she were in her classroom five days a week. I have friends who have chosen not to send their children to these child care camps, because it is counter to the goal of limiting exposure to their children, their peers and teachers. The data shows that in school transmission rates are lower than in the community.

There is no need for me to go into the importance of education, we all understand this. We also understand all of the harmful negative outcomes associated with denied access to high quality education. I'm sure this was at the forefront of your minds when weighing your options and making your decisions.

I have always been a proponent of public education. I have felt strongly that families in a community have to have some "skin in the game." It takes resources and advocacy to help support and improve neighborhood schools. When families who can opt out of public education do, they take with them those resources needed to help support all of the children in their community.

I have always felt that public schools have our children's backs, but that feeling has changed. I work as a nurse, I am an essential worker, and I do not resent or fear that. I am thankful for the opportunity to continue supporting my patients in the community. If any of you or your family members were in need of medical attention, there would be front line health care workers there to care for you. I do not feel that the schools in our community have stepped up to fulfil their integral role in the lives and futures of our children. It feels as if our schools are not holding up their end of the social contract. No one has been able to explain to me the difference between "essential" and "essential, but..."

We know the best practices for keeping people safe, hand washing, masks, and social distancing. We also see that recommended social distancing is not achievable at times, we are somehow managing. We all still have to shop at the

11/23/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - Hybrid school schedule

grocery store and gas station, and see the mechanic, veterinarian, or doctor. These services are essential to our lives, and we do not question that and shut them down.

I feel that many of the decisions made by the School Board have been misguided. I ask that you please look at the data, see where our children are safest, and consider what is being lost when you decide to limit our children's access to education.

Sincerely,

Melissa Cotter

Sent from my iPhone

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**Serious Concerns about CSCT Cuts**

2 messages

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**Camille Barraclough** <cbarraclough@mcpsmt.org>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, Nov 30, 2020 at 4:10 PM

11/30/2020

Board of Trustees-

We are writing to voice our concern, for the second time in six months, regarding the recent cuts to CSCT services and staff in our buildings. During the last two weeks, many MCPS schools were notified of cuts to their teams, eliminating mental health support for a significant portion of our most at risk students. These amazing staff care about and do all that they can to support struggling students. Our schools, which are currently stretched thin by the increasingly severe COVID-19 crisis and lack of trained personnel who can fill the gap left by the elimination of CSCT staff, will be weakened further. Despite continued need, ongoing COVID-19 related stress, and the therapeutic damage that will be done, many CSCT staff will be laid off beginning December 7, 2020, leaving a significant void in the provision of mental health services to our most at-risk students and families.

The students and families served by CSCT often experience poverty in addition to trying to manage extensive trauma and other mental health difficulties. Many of our at-risk families are focused on meeting basic needs, such as food, shelter, and survival of this crisis, while they lean on CSCT to provide therapeutic intervention and support to their students who have risen to the top of our concern within each of our buildings. In our community, families with financial means will receive therapy and support and have viable options. Families that lack resources, or who struggle with intellectual or mental health capacity, are being left behind without the opportunity to stabilize and receive assistance with connection to these vital services. Many students and families have established trusting relationships with CSCT staff, enabling treatment that would otherwise be out of reach. The bridge that CSCT builds between our schools and our families in need is a lifeline for our students. Additionally, by supporting the emotional regulation of our at-risk students, CSCT improves the classroom experience for all of our students and staff.

The detrimental effect of the elimination of this support for our MCPS students and families is immeasurable. In this time of crisis, increased mental health services are critical, and such services save lives. As school psychologists, we advocate for a closer analysis of the MCPS contract with WMMHC, the priorities of both organizations, and scrutiny regarding the recent layoffs. We also stand in solidarity with CSCT staff, and strongly endorse continued access to mental health services for all of our MCPS students, especially our most vulnerable. Further, with a Montana legislative session soon upon us, we are a large group of stakeholders and would be willing to join WMMHC to work to keep mental health services on the table for Montana children and families.

We appreciate your consideration and attention to this situation. Any of the following school psychologists can be contacted for further discussion.

In Solidarity,

MCPS School Psychologists:

Amy Burton	Laura Barr	Camille Barraclough	Kelly Jennings
Janet Metcalf	Julie Parker	Jacquelyn Burgstrom	Kim Story
Axel Yount	Rebekah Gumm		

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## **Include high school in the discussion**

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**Anna Puryear** <annalpuryear@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, Nov 23, 2020 at 5:57 PM

MCPS Board of Trustees,

I write regarding the discussion about bringing K-2 learners back to campus 4-5 days a week.

At the same time you are wanting a feasibility study for bringing K-2 learners back to campus, the MOA is being opened for enrollment with staffing coming from our school buildings. In addition, you have stated the need for our 5 protocols to be followed and that staffing at the elementary level is already strenuous. I am wondering how teachers and administrators are meant to follow protocols with more learners and less staff. The teachers have stated the learners are making progress because of low class sizes and better able to follow the safety protocols. I am not sure why there is push to have these learners back in the classroom. My only thought is child care. I do agree our FIT families need more support and should have the opportunity to attend additional days should the administrators and staff are able to make a plan for these learners to be successful while also able to maintain the safety protocols and low class sizes.

In addition, it has been disheartening to hear little discussion about our high school learners. I feel it is assumed the kids are doing fine. While my house, with 2 highschoolers (Senior and Sophomore at Big Sky), thought the rotating schedule just wouldn't work, it has gone smoother than anticipated. I attribute that to the wonderful teachers and an administration that has had wonderful communication and support for my daughters. That being said, these kids are making it, but aren't ok, not even close. We are glad the hybrid will continue through the end of the semester so all classes can be completed with the rotation schedule. I don't know what the Spring semester brings, but I urge the board and the Task Force to consider the high schools as well. These learners need more than what they are getting. Most specifically my Senior who is an IB Diploma Candidate. While she only has 2 classes at a time, to complete the IB requirements she is working on all her classes every week. As she is doing this, her teachers and administrators are also supporting her and all the learners all of the time with meetings and 0 periods.

The teachers need to have more contact with these learners. They are working so very hard to meet all their needs, but it is so difficult when the teachers see them for 11 days and then not again for 6 weeks. My girls would rather have every class remotely, rather than the hybrid or going back 5 days a week in person.

I'm not in support of bringing more students back, while taking staff to staff the MOA, However, if there is a discussion about our K-2 learners, then we should be having a discussion about all our learners.

The most important thing is that our learners and all the staff in the building are safe. If we are not safe, learning will not happen.

Thank you for your service and work to ensure our learning community is safe.  
Anna Puryear

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**In-person K-5**

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**Tammy Reschke** <tamreschke@gmail.com>

Tue, Nov 24, 2020 at 9:50 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear MCPS School Board,

From the comfort of your homes and zoom sessions, you are considering the feasibility of having all students K-2 or K-5 return to full in-person instruction. Would you be willing to be in our place? Would you be willing to hold your board meeting:

- In a typical classroom of 900 square feet?
- with 15 to 25 people?
- who need routine reminders to wash their hands and pull their mask over their nose?
- Sitting 3 feet apart?
- for approximately 5 hours each day? (You are allowed two-15 minute breaks for recess and to use the shared restroom.)
- lowering your mask for an occasional sip from your water bottle?
- with several individuals removing their masks for 15+ minutes to eat breakfast?
- and all individuals removing your masks later in the day to eat lunch?

I hope you felt an escalating sense of unease as you read this list. As a teacher in the hybrid model, I am working under these conditions with the exception of having 10-12 individuals in the room who sit 6 feet apart.

The only reasonable or safe feasible option is to remain in hybrid — or go fully remote.

We are living in a pandemic. I know there is a strong desire to return to business as usual. We will get there! But that time is not now. If you are not comfortable working in the above conditions, please do not require it of us.

Tamra Reschke  
5th Grade Teacher  
MCPS

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## Hawthorne Parent Teacher Association Board Letter

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**Allie McFarland** <alliemcfarland4@gmail.com>

Wed, Dec 2, 2020 at 8:39 PM

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

Hello MCPS Board Members,

On behalf of the Hawthorne Elementary Parent Teacher Association Board, I am sending this letter in regard to our position on moving forward in the Hybrid Plus and Phase 2 model. Thank you for your consideration, and for all your time and effort this year especially.

Best, Allie McFarland



**MCPS School Board COVID Letter from Hawthorne PTA .pdf**

27K

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December 2, 2020

To: Missoula County School Board

We appreciate your diligent work in guiding Missoula County Public Schools during the re-opening of schools this fall. We understand the numerous factors taken into consideration when determining how and when to transition between schedules/phases.

As the Parent Teacher Association Board of Hawthorne School, we'd like to express our great satisfaction with how Hawthorne has handled the initial Hybrid model. Our students have enjoyed very small class sizes and very thorough health/safety protocols. We have been looking forward to a transition to the Hybrid Plus model, and hopefully Phase 2 soon. We agree with Superintendent Rob Watson's "...concerns, especially for our younger students, with their ability to maintain educational progress in the hybrid on the remote days" as well as "...concerns about food insecurity and lack of access to social/emotional supports for our students during the hybrid remote days" (September 30 Letter to Parents & Guardians). We also understand the hardships on many families of finding healthy and safe childcare on those remote days. When children mix around the community at different day camps, we have concerns about them returning to Hawthorne and cross-contaminating their own small classes.

If the reason for staying at the Hybrid model is for the safety of kids and staff by keeping the class sizes and mixing at minimum, we feel this is entirely negated by the mixing that occurs when the kids who are in day camps on the days they are out of school return to their classrooms. Being in day camps on remote days has kids mixing with everyone across the community and then bringing that risk back to the smaller classroom. Though mixing also occurs in after school activities, keeping the classes smaller is not necessarily keeping them any safer.

We believe that our students are safe at Hawthorne school, given well-planned and enforced Covid protocols, and their small class sizes (even when adding A/B groups back together). We believe that a transition to Hybrid Plus and Phase 2 will be extremely beneficial academically, socio-emotionally, and even physically, with increased access to food and reduced mixing of kids throughout the community on remote learning days. While community spikes in Covid cases are of course concerning, we still believe in the benefits of returning to school on a more full-time basis.

Thank you for your consideration and thoughtful work.

Best,  
Hawthorne Parent Teacher Association Board

## Public Comment

December 4, 2020

Let's beef up the substitutes!!

Greetings;

My name is Dick Richardson. I am retired from 33 years of teaching and school administration in Montana. Most recently I have worked for the MCPS as a tutor. No one knows the value of on site education for our youth better than I do. I have a son who is a senior at Sentinel High school. Across the state we have seen school closures and alternative study programs in place as a response to the Covid 19 pandemic. A big reason for school closures has been the lack of staffing, especially substitutes. My son has informed me that at the MCPS there have been a regular absence of staff daily generally in the 20% range. Getting substitutes in the schools for \$11.49/hour has been pretty unsuccessful. In the medical facilities and most other institutions there have been stipends, hazard pay, and multiple considerations to encourage them to stay at work. The MCPS has done nothing to encourage substitutes.

The permanent staff at MCPS is unionized and has contractual agreements offering benefits and other amenities. Substitutes have nothing. In order to keep our schools staffed I would propose you offer the non-certified substitutes \$20.00/hr and the certified substitutes \$25.00/hr for the duration of the pandemic until school resumes with full staffing and programs. There are no contract or negotiation considerations and the dollars that are being saved with the reduced facilities and program offerings it should be affordable. Let the community know that we care about education in Missoula.

Please consider this at your next regular board meeting.

Sincerely,



Dick Richardson

3035 Spark

406 396-0502



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

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## Hybrid Learning is a Joke

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**Theresa Cole** <supert3030@gmail.com>

Mon, Dec 7, 2020 at 9:19 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear MCPS Board,

My name is Theresa Cole. My daughter is in 8th grade at C.S. Porter. I am thoroughly disgusted by the board's decision to continue hybrid learning. Our children deserve a quality education and have received quite the opposite since March 2020. There is no excuse for MCPS to still be doing hybrid learning. Every person I talk to agrees with me. I don't know why our voices and concerns have been ignored. If people are afraid to send their kids to school then they should be doing the Online Academy. I would happily send my child to Hellgate Elementary, Target Range, Frenchtown, St. Joseph's or any other local school to ensure that she is not being left in the dust academically. Shame on you MCPS for failing to educate our kids.

Sincerely,

Theresa Cole

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**MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

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## **Written comment on second semester**

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**Velita Rholi** <vrholi@mcpsmt.org>

Fri, Dec 11, 2020 at 3:42 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello,

As a high school teacher, I want to voice my support to keep Mondays a remote learning day through second semester. It has been vitally important as a time to contact students, grade, and prepare for long blocked classes in an ever-changing environment.

Thank you,

**Velita Rholi**

Social Studies Department

AP Human Geography and Human Geography

Hellgate High School

406-728-2400, ext. 6634

vrholi@mcpsmt.org

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

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## Full-time school needed for mental stability

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**Tiffany Brown** <tbrown@mcpsmt.org>

Tue, Dec 15, 2020 at 1:15 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, Christina Stevens <cmstevens@mcpsmt.org>

To whom this may concern,

I am emailing as both a staff member for MCPS and a parent.

As a staff member, I see the need for students to be in school daily. I see the struggles that the students are having not being in school. Not being in front of a teacher and being able to engage in classroom activities is really affecting them. It is affecting their mental health at all ages. For some of my students not knowing how long it will be before they get another meal or even being somewhere warm. For some of our students we are their constant and they need us now more than ever.

As a parent, my own child's mental health is at risk. I have dealt with so much negative stuff with my own child because of not being in school and not having that ability to ask questions when needed or seeking the help that she needs. My child is in high school and she feels as if she is not getting a quality education because she is only being taught 2 days a week. When my 15 year old daughter complains that her homework was 1 question (Are you here?) provided by her teacher, there is something wrong with the way things are happening.

As a staff member, it is frustrating to see other schools, so close to us, such as Hellgate Elementary and Lolo elementary that are going 5 days a week and are still open. I know they have had their ups and downs but I feel that the students are getting a better education than MCPS students at this point. As a staff member and a parent I would like to see MCPS at least TRY to move to 5 days or even 4 days a week. If we at least try getting our kids back 5 days or even 4 days a week and it gets bad then we back off.

I know as a parent I am so frustrated with MCPS for not trying! I feel as if we are too scared to make a union member angry. I feel that MCPS needs to listen to the community members and move to 5 days a week. What if... We move 4 or 5 days a week and it is a total flop? You will have a better response from parents because at least we tried. At least we made all the effort to keep kids safe while in school. What if... we move 4 or 5 days a week and it is a huge success? Then you will have extremely happy families.

Thanks,

**Tiffany Brown**

Administrative Secretary  
Jeannette Rankin Elementary  
5150 Bigfork Rd.  
Missoula, MT 59803  
406-542-4010 (P)  
406-542-4012 (F)

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