



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## BASKETBALL GAME ATTENDANCE

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Joy Lake <jlake@amerion.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 5:48 PM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MCPS

WE ARE THE GRANDPARENTS FOR A SENIOR WHO PLAYS BASKETBALL AT SENTINAL HIGH SCHOOL

WE WOULD LIKE TO WATCH PLAY SINCE THIS IS HIS LAST YEAR

COULD YOU PLEASE INCREASE THE ATTENDANCE FOR THE GAMES. THERE IS PLENTY OF ROOM FOR A LOT MORE PEOPLE AND STILL SOCIAL DISTANCE

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ARE ALLOWING ONLY 2 PER PLAYER. IT DOES NPT MAKE SENSE WHEN ALL THE BARS AND ETC. CAN REMAIN OPEN UNTIL 2 AM. OTHER SHOOOL IN THE COUNTY HAVE INCREASED THEIR SPECTATORS GREATLY.

WHAT IS GOING ON WITH MCPS

GEORGE AND JOY LAKE

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## Phase 2 concerns

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Angel <angelisrad@gmail.com>

Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 4:17 PM

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

Hello Mr. Miller and our MCPS Board,

We very much appreciate your time and the very real fact that the past year has been unprecedented and challenging, to say the very least. We have full confidence that everyone involved has the best intentions when it comes to educating our students in a safe environment.

With that said, we sent our son to school today, the first day of Phase 2 for high school students, with positive attitudes and confidence that gathering this many students and teachers into one building during a pandemic would be OK. But it doesn't sound OK at all. Neither of us would enter a building with zero social distancing, and we are incredibly uncomfortable asking our son to do so.

Our son isn't a complainer, he's got a generally positive outlook on life and a lot of faith in humanity, but he came home today completely distraught in having to accept that he will eventually contract COVID by attending school. We do not have the option to take advantage of the online academy as it does not offer IB classes. His education is incredibly important to him, but he feels unsafe in attending school in Phase 2.

We have personally spoken with a dozen educators employed by MCPS who disagree with moving into Phase 2. If the educators aren't comfortable and the students are scared, why are we putting people at risk?

We're at a loss here. Do we send our son to school to get COVID, or do we keep him home and hope he gets the education he needs through the college program he's enrolled in? Is there an opportunity to go back to the hybrid schedule? If he chooses to avoid a place where social distancing is impossible, how will he earn enough credits to graduate?

We want to be part of the solution, but we're not willing to put our son in danger, so we are looking to you for guidance.

Very sincerely,  
Angel and Dave Hughes  
Hellgate High School parents

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libbysoll@gmail.com has attached the following document:



## Schedule Letter



To whom this may concern,

I am a student at Big Sky High School, and I am very concerned about the possible schedule change next year. Many of my peers and I believe that it would be best for our school to remain with the current eight-period block schedule. To reduce our schedules from eight classes to seven would limit opportunities for our students. Big Sky offers many electives that allow students to try new things while still having an adequate amount of room for required core classes. With seven periods many students would miss out on those opportunities.

I am aware that Big Sky is known for having low reading and math scores, however, I do not think this has anything to do with the block schedule. The Big Sky district has many financially impaired families and when students have to worry about money, their academic performance will naturally decline. There are other ways to help struggling students, completely changing the schedule would not be helpful, it would be stressful.

As an honors student, I do not think that altering the schedule would a positive change on my academic journey, and I know that many of my peers feel the same way. With only seven classes, students cannot be in the health science academy and also complete enough IB classes to get an IB diploma. The modified block schedule may work for some schools, but I believe it is not right for ours.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Soll

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## Going back to school K-5

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**Maureen Loewenwarter** <mloewenwarter@mcps.k12.mt.us>  
To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Fri, Feb 5, 2021 at 8:26 AM

Dear School Board Members,

My name is Maureen Loewenwarter and I am a teacher at Rattlesnake Elementary School and I am also a parent of a high school student at Big Sky. I am writing today to show my support for bringing all K-2 students back to school full time. I urge you to vote in favor of the proposal.

I have three reasons why I support all students K-2 coming back to school. (I want to recommend that we make it all students K-5).

First, I believe we at MCPS have done an outstanding job with the mitigations we have in place. Every day I see students, teachers, and staff being extremely diligent with wearing their masks, washing their hands, wiping down surfaces, and keeping their distances. Our district has been very thoughtful about what needs to happen to keep us all safe. I believe we will continue practicing the necessary measures to keep us all safe, no matter how many students we have in our classrooms. I do not believe students are contracting Covid from school. Rather, I believe they are contracting it because they need to go to other places when they are off from school.

Secondly, I believe students need to be learning at school. While I applaud the parents, grandparents, and other adults or siblings who are helping students when they are at home, it is not the same as being in school with a teacher. It is hard for me as a teacher to know how much support a student of mine is getting with their work at home. I also don't know how much support they are needing. Along with that, the students who are struggling the most are the ones who do not have the support with their assignments when they are at home. They are not getting the necessary help they need. They are the ones falling behind their peers. As a teacher, I believe students need to be in the classroom with a teacher getting the help, guidance, and support they need. And, we can do it safely.

My third reason is I believe teachers are both creative and flexible. We are always making adjustments to our day and our schedule because that is the nature of the job. I believe we can and will make the necessary adjustments to be safe in our classroom. While some may see many barriers that keep us from being able to have all our students back or may see reasons why it won't work, I believe we have to try. Other school districts have been doing it since September. It is time to try it at MCPS. We have to do what is best for kids. As a teacher, I know I may not be able to do all the things I have always done in my classroom at this point in time. But, I look at it as an opportunity to do it differently and safely. Again, we as teachers know how to be creative and flexible. Bringing students back will require us to be creative in how we approach this situation. We will have to be flexible with our schedule, our classroom environment, and our lessons. We know how to do this.

In closing, I want to say I believe MCPS has done an outstanding job keeping our students safe. We have been very diligent in taking the necessary precautions and it shows. Cases are not being spread at school. We can continue to do it right. Let us get back to teaching all our students full time. I would like to suggest you consider bringing back all students K-5. I know we believe we need to start with the younger students, but I can tell you my third graders need to be in school full time as well.

Thank you and I appreciate all the work you do for our schools.

Maureen Loewenwarter

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

To: mloewenwarter@mcps.k12.mt.us



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## School on Mondays

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**Kaitlyn Skinner** <krskinner2024@gmail.com>

Fri, Feb 5, 2021 at 8:51 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear school board,

Please don't have the high schools go back to school on Mondays. It would mean extra exposure and a decrease in the mental health of students. School is stressful and it helps to have an extra day at home. Teachers also need Mondays to spend with their family and to finish grading homework. It's hard enough to wear a mask for about 22 hours a week with 4 days of school and adding another 5 1/2 hours would make it harder. This week was the first week of 4 days of school and it was difficult to adjust. I'm currently in drivers Ed so I get about less sleep than usual and school is harder.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

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## Keep Mondays Remote

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**Brendan Work** <bawork@mcpsmt.org>

Mon, Feb 8, 2021 at 8:39 PM

To: publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us

Dear trustees,

My name is Brendan Work and I am the Arabic teacher for the city's three public high schools. I am very proud that Missoula has the only Arabic classes open to the public between Minneapolis and Seattle, and that as a result, our sharp and generous students have the skills they need to aid Syrian refugees in their own language or succeed in business in the Middle East. During this pandemic, however, I have felt disrespected by decisions that jeopardize my family's lives and reduced the value of my work.

I am particularly frustrated about hearing that Mondays are soon to be added to the in-person school week, which would take away the only time I have to contact missing students and teach make-up lessons. To reduce COVID transmission, I teach my Sentinel and Big Sky students online. Can you imagine how hard it is to listen to and speak one of the world's hardest languages across two computers with a mask on? If you do, then you understand why you need time for one-and-one or small group tutoring, which I do on Mondays. I have a three-year-old, so I know how hard it is to work with kids at home. But please listen to the dozens of other public comments that have stressed this same point: remote Mondays are *essential* to our students' success.

Of course, I feel angry about comments like Trustee Mercer's, that the harm we are exposing ourselves to is "worth it." But I also feel sick and betrayed to see week after week of public comment in which teachers beg and plead to be heard, followed inevitably by a decision that disregards us. Our governor won't vaccinate us and the CDC says we don't need to be. I am left to look for useful representation at the local level, and I hope you will not let me down.

Brendan Work

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

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**(no subject)**

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Jordan K <jmnttrails@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 4:12 PM

Dear Trustees,

First of all, thank you for your service to our community, especially during this pandemic year.

I am writing because it has come to my attention that there is intention to return to five day a week of in-person instruction. This worries me for a number of reasons which are discussed below.

As a kindergarten teacher, I love having my kids back four days a week. There are pros and cons to this schedule change, of course: the kids have more routine with their learning, there isn't so much pressure on parents, and the kids have more students to interact with at school. With that said, I would be lying if I said I feel safe in my current position. The fact is, kindergarteners cannot social distance. They love being where the action is and have limited spatial awareness developmentally, so social distancing either takes up a lot of our day in the form of reminders or doesn't happen to the extent I think is necessary to keep our classroom a healthy space. Additionally, teachers and other school staff are unlikely to get vaccines for months on the current rollout, regardless of how little physical distance we can keep from our students. Surveillance testing is not available in our district, so the realities of asymptomatic spread are unclear. Additionally, our nursing staff is already spread thin with every nurse contact tracing and COVID testing for the three schools they each serve. I worry that the addition of Mondays will make it impossible for our nurses to successfully contact trace, test, and meet the needs of the specific students on their caseloads as well as the needs of the overall student bodies of the buildings they serve.

I understand that there are some community members who are frustrated by the lack of vehicles in school parking lots on Mondays. I want to assure those community members that teachers are hard at work preparing, planning, and cleaning for the week to come during our Mondays. I have never felt so prepared to teach as I have this year. Sure, I'm still putting in extra hours every week to make sure my classroom runs smoothly (I've been putting in an average of 6-10 hours per week unpaid this year... This, by the way, should not be normalized or expected, but it is my reality during this pandemic year), but that Monday time makes such a huge difference in the elementary grades where we are with our kids all day (minus a recess or two depending on the staffing at our specific school). While there may be exceptions, the Monday time is coveted and well-used by the staff at MCPS.

Additionally, I feel the need to clarify that many buildings were specifically told to not come in on Mondays in order to support the nursing staff's contact tracing efforts. We were told for weeks to please work at home and many of us heeded those calls, which is a large reason you might see partially-full parking lots on our remote days.

I am not opposed to returning to five days a week eventually, but we must do so safely and with the well-being of all of our school community members in mind. Without the guarantee of sufficient personnel and time to contact trace, give tests, and support the existing medical needs of our schools, any further return only jeopardizes the consistency of our routine, the health of our students, and the health (and burnout) of our school staff. Please support our school communities by ensuring that any decision to increase in-person learning time is as completely safe as possible, and just as important, that such a return is deemed necessary.

Finally, I'd like to close on a positive. Our kids just took the winter STAR Early Literacy and iReady Math Diagnostics, and their results are promising: At the beginning of the year, 21% of my kids came in at grade level for math. Now, 64% of my kids are at grade level. 16% of my kids came in on grade level in literacy skills... that number is now 59%. Do we have work left to do? Of course. But the kids are doing well. We're seeing growth and I have no doubt that we will get them where they need to be as they transition to first grade this spring.

To close, I would like to welcome any Trustees to visit my classroom. My door is always open.

Thank you for your time.

Kindly,  
Jordan Krause  
Kindergarten