



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## It's time to go back to school full time

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**Greg Browning** <gregbrowning@outlook.com>

Wed, Oct 28, 2020 at 1:59 PM

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

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

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## Please Open OUR Schools!

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T Olson <taddolson@gmail.com>

Wed, Oct 28, 2020 at 4:38 PM

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

Dear Board of Trustees,

I believe we can collectively agree that in-person education is substantially better than any hybrid model. As a family we have the advantage of seeing first-hand how substantively different the quality of (or lack-therof) our children's education is at Hellgate Elementary versus MCPS. We have three children attending Hellgate Elementary which wisely started our children 5 days per week since the beginning of the school year. Meanwhile our child in High School is being robbed of a decent education and interaction with her peers and teachers.

Why?

We are no longer living with the unknown. Last spring, nobody knew how deadly the virus was so we understandably played it safe. Now we know. According to the \*CDC 137 deaths have been "coded" as COVID related nationwide among the 0-17 years age group from 2/1/20 to 10/24/20. Significant to those families no doubt, but shutting down our schools for such a statistically nominal threat to our children seems to anyone using logic as EXTREME and nonsensical!

What about the argument that our kids will pass the virus to those more at risk, i.e. older age groups? Fortunately, we can look at a school IN OUR CITY, with many kids sharing the same homes to see that opening Hellgate Elementary has not created a spike in Covid cases. In fact, from what I can ascertain there are no more new cases coming out of Hellgate Elementary than MCPS schools and MCPS school children have been effectively imprisoned since March. Let's not create more problems for our kids and families by allowing fear to dictate your decision making. Look at the facts, open our schools and accept the new normal, hiding from it only delays reality and everyone loses in the meantime.

Sincerely,

Tadd Olson

\*<https://data.cdc.gov/NCHS/Provisional-COVID-19-Death-Counts-by-Sex-Age-and-S/9bhg-hcku>

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## Reopen our schools

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**Phyllis Schaefer** <schaeferpk@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Thu, Oct 29, 2020 at 7:48 AM

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.

Kerry Schaefer  
2379 Hwy 83 North  
Seeley Lake, MT 59868  
406-677-2371  
(cell) 406-788-9206

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Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## School Reopening

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Carrie Ruff <rcbowwow@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Thu, Oct 29, 2020 at 1:03 PM

Hello,

This email is to inform you that my family highly supports moving MCPS schools to hybrid plus-4 days per week. Our 7th grader is not being challenged during his remote days and really misses his friends. We've seen his usual happy self become moody and lash out at others. It is well documented that the uptick in COVID-19 cases is not a result of schools. And our health department would not hesitate to shut the schools down if they could prove any correlation. All of the schools but one in the immediate area are going 5 days a week and there have been no closures due to student health risks.

We have hesitated making our wishes known thinking that you would work toward what is best for our children but now it looks like you will not be proceeding with reopening plans any time soon. Also it is my understanding that for every parent that supports reopening, 4 say no. I want you to know that there are many of us out there that really need you to consider moving forward with reopening. Please support all of your public that elected you and step up and do the right thing.

Sincerely,  
Carrie Ruff and family

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## **In support of return to the classroom**

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**Maureen DeShazo** <maureendeshazo@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 29, 2020 at 1:07 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

This email is in support of a return to the classroom for our MCPS students.

The toll on lower income families is alarming and of primary concern to me.

The local news has reported that as many as 40-50% of our Missoula families are under severe financial strain because the parents have to stay with their children instead of going to work.

As a retired virologist I know how impressive the immune system, and how low the infection rate, is for children 12 and under. I know also that the guidelines are more easily enforced, and compliance higher, in this age demographic.

So know that returning the children to the classroom full time will serve those people who cannot advocate for themselves.

I know the School Board is in a most difficult situation, (damned if you do and damned if you don't). I assume Board Members were chosen for their positions because of personal integrity and to serve the greater good.

Returning the children to the classroom will do just that.

Maureen DeShazo  
2908 Starlight Drive  
Missoula, MT 59803  
406-493-0766  
maureendeshazo@gmail.com

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**Questions and concerns about retuning to school 4 days a week**

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**Niccole Ostrom** <niccoleostrom@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 30, 2020 at 9:16 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hi my name is Nicci Ostrom, I have two students that attend school in the MCPS district. One is a fifth grader at Jeanette Rankin and the other is an eighth grader at Meadow Hill. To start off I am, along with my children are for sure seeing the effects of not being in school. My first concern by far is their education. My eighth grader is having on average so far FIVE in class days per rotation that is counting a quarter of completion for that class. That has been ONE essay revised and completed in English to count as a quarter of the class. It has been ONE unit covered in science, it has been ONE unit in math and one test. Then they leave the rotation to go to the next and are expected to pick up where they left off and move forward after 5 weeks of not having the class. How do you build on that and expect success? How is this acceptable with the district? In my opinion this should not be acceptable! This is not an education! On that note if this is an education and acceptable, why in a "normal" school year is 9.5 weeks required and now it is acceptable to have FIVE in class days of school and FIVE remote days to complete a quarter? The ball is being dropped.

MCPS offered MOA for families that do not feel comfortable going to school, but my family who feels comfortable going to school does not have that choice?

Are the risks of not being in school considered or just the just risks of being in school? How many kids are not being accounted for? How are all the schools in the surrounding areas successfully going to school and MCPS can't even give it a try? Our kids deserve better than this!

Thank you for your time.

Nicci Ostrom

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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>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Sat, Oct 31, 2020 at 11:10 AM

Good morning trustees and Happy Halloween to you all.

I'm writing you this morning for several reasons, and I'll bullet point them out:

1. We have a kindergarten son at Jeanette Rankin Elementary, a 4th grader at the same school and a 6th grader at Meadow Hill. It is becoming increasingly challenging for my wife and myself to home school our little Sammy kindergarten son. When he asks me every 2-3 minutes when I might be helping our other boys, "Daddy what next?" That's hard, he's 6 and like a typical 6 year old has the attention span of a nat:)
2. We inquired with Garden City Montessori on Thursday of this week about their enrollment and what they are doing - Sam went to pre-school there for 2 years. We are pondering having him in school for 4 days - because it's hurting his education only 2 days and it's becoming more stressful on our household. Point of this entire thing - Jeanette Rankin for years has had waiting lists, and we wanted to be assured he would have a spot in 1st grade should we go this route. I spoke to the principal Ms. Stevens there yesterday and we are indeed within the boundary and assured our spot. Have we come up with a plan as a district for this scenario for families?
3. The principal at Jeanette Rankin, Chris Stevens, wants our kids back in school and specifically told me there are ONLY 2 teachers on her staff who don't feel comfortable with kids coming back. The rest, however, are AFRAID to speak up - this is a problem. As a former educator - the more I reflect on public education and the "system", the more I'm realizing it's broken. We have teachers getting tenure after 3 years, and in turn being part of a union they gain too much power and say. Who suffers as a result - the kids, the kids, the kids.
4. My older brother lives in Boise, technically Eagle just north of Boise. Their family is experiencing the same challenges as ours with my 2 nephews who are 11 and 8. Their school district is the West Ada school district with 8 high schools, so nearly 3 times our size. They are returning their younger kiddos, K-5, 5 DAYS A WEEK beginning 11/9 - <https://www.ktvb.com/article/news/education/west-ada-school-board-trustees-to-discuss-remote-learning-plan-vice-chairman-to-resign-during-tuesdays-meeting/277-07c63b6f-8682-46bd-8366-a2aa5e38ac6a>.
5. We can't start anywhere if we don't start SOMEWHERE. I've expressed to Rob that let's look at other options, and Chris Stevens mentioned this same thing to me yesterday. We HAVE to get our younger children back in school. K-2 or K-5 - again we can't start anywhere if we don't start somewhere.

Lastly, remember \$33 million dollars of tax payer money goes to MCPS annually. We are paying over \$7,000 annually to our district. That tax bill is attached for you.

They're doing it all around us and with success. We can do this with a plan that's a compromise for everyone involved - parents, teachers, and students. I had lunch with a friend from Frenchtown yesterday - 5 days a week and success. We have some family friends exploring St. Joes, they toured it yesterday - they're open and fully open with success.

Thank you for continuing to listen to those of us wishing, and most importantly HOPING for kids back in school. Have a great day.

Respectfully,  
Jason and Alana Schaefer

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

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Schaefer\_DeShazo Taxes.jpg  
3437K

Levy Description	Amount
RETIREMENT-ELEMENTARY	583.68
RETIREMENT-HIGH SCHOOL	341.46
TRANSPORTATION - HS/ELEM	80.16
<b>Total Local School</b>	<b>7,143.82</b>
<b>Special Districts</b>	
MISSOULA CO. RURAL FIRE	3,072.70
<b>State School</b>	
STATE ELEM EQUALIZATION	707.36
STATE HS EQUALIZATION	471.56
STATE SCHOOL FOUNDATION EQ	857.40
STATE UNIVERSITY MILLAGE	128.60
STATE VO-TECH MILLAGE	32.16
<b>Total State School</b>	<b>2,197.08</b>



## EDUCATION

## West Ada School Board approves new reopening plan, approves motion for chairman resignation

Grades K-5 will return to the classroom all day Tuesday-Friday with early release on Monday. Grades 6-12 will remain on an alternating schedule with remote Mondays.

West Ada School Board approves new reopening plan, app...

Author: Joey Prechtl, Celina Van Hying  
Published: 3:46 PM MDT October 27, 2020  
Updated: 10:30 PM MDT October 27, 2020



MERIDIAN, Idaho — The West Ada School District Board of Trustees held their regular meeting on Tuesday at 6 p.m. During this meeting, the board voted unanimously to adopt a revised reopening plan with recommendations from Idaho doctors and Central District Health.

Under this new plan, students in grades K-5 will return to the classroom for a full day Tuesday-Friday. On Mondays, students will attend in-person classes but will be released early.

Students in grades 6-12 will continue to learn remotely on Mondays. Under these new revisions, students will be broken into two teams in order to allow schools to follow distancing guidelines. Team 1 will attend in-person classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Team 2 will attend on Wednesdays and Fridays. Students will learn remotely on the days they are not in the classroom.

This new schedule will begin on Nov. 10.

Rather than set criteria that would require the entire district to transition to remote learning, the board decided to allow schools to transfer to remote learning on a case-by-case basis. If one or more schools in the district experience an outbreak of COVID-19, those schools will begin learning remotely rather than the whole district.

Former CEO of St. Luke's Dr. David Pate originally recommended that students in grades 4-5 return to the classroom on an alternating schedule similar to that of grades 6-12, but would also be released early on Monday.

Pate suggested this change be made due to students in grades 4-5 having a higher classroom cap, making distancing more difficult.

The board ultimately approved the second recommendation they were given unanimously.

Trustee Amy Johnson made a motion to ask the West Ada administration to develop a plan that would give parents the authority to decide how their kids would receive instruction during the upcoming semester. Should this be adopted, parents would be able to decide whether their children will learn remotely or in-person full-time.

Trustee Johnson's motion passed 3-0-2.

Before adjourning, vice-chairman Steve Smylie tendered his resignation, stating he felt it was time for him to move on. He briefly touched on the criticism he has received from West Ada parents, teachers, and even government officials.

"What we heard tonight was a lot of anger, a lot of passion. I get it," Smylie said. "I've listened to radio commentators and other people that have gotten onto social media. I've been called a lot of wonderful little names. I've had about 540 emails and I stopped counting."

Smylie also stated he feels none of the compromises proposed by the board have been accepted by the public.

"I am at the age where I've failed in trying to retire," he said. "It's time to get back to normal for me. I have every confidence in the leaders we picked in this district and I have every confidence in you, my colleagues, that you'll find somebody that'll have that same spirit."

Hundreds of West Ada teachers participated in a districtwide sick-out on Monday, Oct. 19, and Tuesday, Oct. 20. Though the sick-out ended on Wednesday, Oct. 21, West Ada parents filed a lawsuit claiming the sick-out was a strike, which is illegal under Idaho common law.

Tuesday's meeting will be live-streamed on KTVB.COM and on the KTVB YouTube channel.

To watch the board meeting, click below:

**Watch live: West Ada School Board to discuss remote learning, chairman resign...**



#### **Related Articles**

**Lawsuit claims West Ada teachers' organized 'sick-out' was an illegal strike**

**Vice-chairman of West Ada School Board scheduled to resign in the board's next meeting**



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

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## Children in school part 2

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Patrick Carls <patrick@montanaburgersinc.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Sun, Nov 1, 2020 at 5:27 PM

Dear board members,

We just received our tax statement and we paid over \$2,200 to our local schools. MCPS employees are still getting paid regardless. What about the working class that is having to miss two days of work, or hire a sitter, or send them to a child care facility? Some are actually losing money! Our economy needs our children in school. There are soooo many credited publications and studies done that show why our kids need to be in school. They also show how low the transmission is in the classrooms with proper protocols in place. If not having enough staff is the issue because of contact tracing then why didn't MCPS plan for this and hire? What planning was done all summer when the virus was still present? We all knew it wasn't going anywhere! In business if you do not have enough people to operate effectively, you hire more people. There's no reason a school districts can not run like a business. I'd be happy to sit in on a board meeting and explain how the two directly correlate.

I understand the threat of this virus spreading to our vulnerable and those with underlying conditions. It's very scary and keeps me up at night. My mom is 74 years old, has COPD, early Parkinson's, and does not get around very well. She understands that she cannot go out and has isolated since March. The impact this virus is having on her is unexplainable. The same goes for our children, they are our future and right now the future is 2 days of maybe 4 hours of learning, and two days at home with who knows what. I know what my kids are doing but what about the children that are home alone because their parents can't take the day off or afford child care? Are they safe? Eating a good meal? Getting physical activity? Learning?

I'm asking the school board listen to our requests, we should have a voice along with the teachers, not instead of. We can come to a compromise and put a plan together that benefits everyone, teachers, children, and parents.

Patrick and Heather Carls

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

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## Our children need to be in school

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**Lisa castle** <lisaogren@yahoo.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Mon, Nov 2, 2020 at 9:35 AM

Please put our children in school full time. Not only are our children bored, since the three days of remote learning is actually 20 minutes of busy work, these kids are falling farther and farther behind the other kids that have been going 5 days a week since August. We have to make a plan that puts them back in school. We can't keep just pushing it off. If it takes doing away with the MOA to get our teachers back in school, then that is what needs to happen. There is another option for families that want to stay home, it is traditional homeschooling. I understand that everyone has been trying to do their best but when we voted in August, the majority that wanted their kids in school. Now the MOA doesn't allow the majority to do so because of teacher shortages. Please consider all of the children that are being left at home with no help, no parental guidance and even no food. It is not safe for them to be home. According to the National board of Pediatricians, the children's mental health, physical health, and educational health are our biggest risks right now. Something had to change! Thank you for your consideration. Lisa Castle

Sent from my iPhone

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## Explore Hellgate School District data and approach

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**Stephanie Lauer** <smulicalauer@gmail.com>

Wed, Nov 4, 2020 at 10:03 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, Pam Wright <pcwright@mcpsmt.org>

Dear MCPS School Board Members,

We want to first thank you for the thoughtful work you are doing to keep our children safe and maintain their excellent education.

We would like to request that you consider the approach that Hellgate School District has taken this school year, and strongly consider the COVID occurrence and spread data associated with that school district. Hellgate School District is in Missoula/Missoula County so therefore subject to the same COVID "threat" as MCPS. However, they have been 5 days a week since the beginning of the school year. Would HSD not be the perfect data set for which to compare school COVID cases and spread under that scenario? MCPS could also explore how they are handling the issue of staffing as I know that is a huge issue for sending the kids back to school more than two days a week. It seems looking at a model or data set in our own community would be the most applicable and meaningful. All parents, MCPS staff, and Board Members agree that ultimately the safe return of students to a 5 day a week scenario with adequate staffing is the goal. The experience of and data from Hellgate School District is a directly applicable and meaningful resource we cannot ignore.

Please consider our comments.

Respectfully,

Stephanie and Josh Lauer - Rattlesnake Elementary student  
Kate and Ryan Chapin - Rattlesnake and Washington students  
Jen and Martin Oakland - Rattlesnake students

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Stephanie Lauer

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## Moving Forward with Hybrid Plus

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**Whitney Guthrie** <jamesandwhitney2@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Wed, Nov 4, 2020 at 1:26 PM

I am writing today completely against moving forward and changing our schedule. I work in the district and I have children who attend school within MCPS. Both as an employee and as a mother our Covid cases are too high to even consider moving forward. We should be talking about going 100% remote.

People seem to be focused on the death rate being low but there is so much more to Covid. There are lifelong challenges and side effects that come along with transmitting the virus. We have spent the last 8 months desperately trying to avoid getting this virus. Including, changing our lifestyles and not seeing friends and family. People are being quarantined and contacted as close contacts everyday which means we are out for 14 days.

I understand online learning is not ideal for some so make changes. You know your kids and what would be beneficial for them. Reach out to the school and teachers. The answer is not going back to put MCPS employees at a higher risk for contracting this potentially deadly virus.

Thanks for your time!  
Whitney Guthrie

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## Graduation Matters? Return to Schools

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**Mark** <markbradford@yahoo.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Wed, Nov 4, 2020 at 9:01 PM

Board of Trustees,

Thank you for your public service for our community. With much respect for your positions, I am writing in support of taking steps toward full time in-class learning. After looking through the MCPS and OPI websites I quickly realized that there is no shortage of data available for these decisions. We have three children in the MCPS school system (elementary, junior high, and high school). My request to go back to school is not from a data perspective, nor a parent, but on behalf of the many students I have talked to about this matter. In my interaction, there has not been one student that prefers online learning over classroom learning. In fact, to be honest, they have a strong distaste towards online learning. The in-person classroom experience is their safe place, routine, and social grounds to not only be educated but more importantly learn life skills that simply can't be taught in any other setting. My wife and I were shocked the other day when our middle school daughter, who has always thrived in school, asked about dropping out. Ironically, we were talking with another parent a few weeks later that mentioned her son had asked the same thing. There are many lenses to filter through these decisions but I encourage the board to not forget the most important, the voice of our students. If the students were able to speak on this matter, I believe the decision would be crystal clear - it is time to take the necessary steps towards in-classroom learning. If graduation truly matters then in-classroom learning needs to happen now before the school dropout rates subtly become a greater and deeper impacting statistic for our students and community than the new Covid-19 cases.

Respectfully,  
Mark and Cristy Bradford

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

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## School opening

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**Suzanne Demarinis** <dsuzluk@gmail.com>

Thu, Nov 5, 2020 at 12:30 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am writing to voice my opinion on the current hybrid model. It IS working. I work in the district and feel that staying in the current hybrid model is the safest for everybody...What we consider normal is not going to happen anytime soon the way things look. Montana is third in the nation for rising COVID cases. We now have 700-1000 plus cases daily. We are in a GLOBAL PANDEMIC ....

People getting COVID burnout is exactly what this virus needs to survive. Bringing back all kids 4 or 5 days a week is asking for trouble.

We care deeply for the students we teach and yes remote learning has its limitations. EVERYBODY is stressed out but we have to stay safe and diligent .

We have been called lazy and selfish by adults for not fully opening to all students all days. It's insulting but we are tough.

If we did open fully open as some suggest we would be completely shut down within a month or two due to COVID cases. I would bet my humble paycheck on that. We are having breakouts now but contact tracing is easier due to smaller class sizes. Another reason it would be difficult to open fully at this time is we are now short staffed.

This very real GLOBAL pandemic has either pushed staff into retirement or less risky occupations. Subs are not knocking our doors down these days ....I can't blame them. As it is we are exposed to numerous students and staff daily in an enclosed building with poor circulation. Staying 6 feet from our students is impossible,

One argument heard is the kids NEED to be in school. They are falling behind academically, emotional needs are not being met, etc. While this is true in some cases, kids are very resilient. Their education can be caught up. They will have their social life back ( us too). however lives lost to COVID cannot be made up.

This is a terrible situation for EVERYONE. You cannot wish normal back!

We must listen to SCIENCE and follow the guidelines no matter how strict and cumbersome they may seem.Dr. Fauci the top leading pandemic scientist predicts a long potentially deadly winter...He knows what he is talking about. This is not his first pandemic..People will let their guard down during the holidays. We will see spikes... Does opening back up fully before the holidays make sense??? No it does not...

This virus needs us to let our guard down so that it can live. Don't give it what it needs to survive.

Thank you,  
Suzanne DeMarinis

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**MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

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**(no subject)**

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**Nicole Sobczak** <nikkisobczak@icloud.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Thu, Nov 5, 2020 at 4:30 PM

I think this is absolutely ridiculous that the Missoula schools are not 5 days a week . These kids should be able to go to school just like everyone else in the state . If you want to keep your child at home for online , then that's your decision but I want my daughter in school 5 days a week !!!!  
Thank you

Sent from my iPhone

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Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## Our children's education

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**Lisa castle** <lisaogren@yahoo.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org  
Cc: Noah Castle <noahcastle@hotmail.com>

Fri, Nov 6, 2020 at 3:47 PM

To the school board,  
My husband and I are asking you to put our kids back in school. The past few months have been so tough on, parents, teachers and students. One of our children is suffering so much emotionally from the lack of school, that we have had to take action for her mental health. Every day she would beg us to send her somewhere that she could go to school full time. After months of tears, boredom, lack of true structured remote learning days, we had to turn to alternate schooling opportunities. We have now enrolled her at a school that has been going 4 days a week since August. The truly sad part of this is, 99% of the children in mcps do not have that opportunity. Every day, that these children are not receiving the full education they deserve, is a true travesty. Thank you for taking the time to listen. Lisa and Noah Castle

Sent from my iPhone

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**MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

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**(no subject)**

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**Nicole Sobczak** <nikkisobczak@icloud.com>  
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Sat, Nov 7, 2020 at 5:22 PM

When do our kids get to go back to school 5 days ?! This is absolutely ridiculous that every school around us is open !!!  
The kids deserve their education!!!

Sent from my iPhone

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**Hybrid model**

2 messages

**amberlp406@gmail.com** <amberlp406@gmail.com>

Sun, Nov 8, 2020 at 2:11 PM

Reply-To: amberlp406@gmail.com

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello,

I have one child in 7th grade at Washington and one in 5th grade at Lewis and Clark. Both are currently enrolled in the hybrid model.

Things are going ok in middle school and the amount of work assigned and teacher involvement seems adequate.

Elementary school is another story. My son has very little work to do on his 3 days at home. He has less than 1 hour per day when he is not in school. Monday seems like a lost opportunity for kids to connect (virtually) another day with their teachers who aren't in the classroom with other students. My son feels like the work is review and "busy work". The book he is assigned to read was an assigned reading in 3rd grade. It is very challenging to keep him engaged in work that doesn't feel meaningful and which is a repeat of curriculum he did 2 years ago. It is extremely hard to get a routine going when we have 5 days off in between school days. It is also hard to motivate him to get school work done while both his parents are at work.

I know Covid rates are rising in Missoula, but having kids safely in school should be the number one priority. Sports are still happening, "out of school" camps and childcare centers are operating in place of schools, mixing kids from different schools outside their classroom cohorts. The hybrid mode is definitely NOT working for many families so I feel strongly that they need to be in school more than 2 days per week. The loss of learning is going to have lasting effects on the kids and the gap is going to continue to widen the longer the kids are out of school.

Thank you for considering the public comments and considering adding more days to the hybrid model.

Amber Phillips

Sent from myMail for iOS

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**MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

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## Hybrid School

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

Sun, Nov 8, 2020 at 4:03 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Dear Board of Trustees,

Please send our kids back to school full time! My daughter is in 8th grade at C.S. Porter. I feel that because she is attending hybrid school she is being robbed of her education. Children are our future and their education is paramount. The fear of people catching Covid is crippling our next generation. Our children's education and mental health are suffering.

Sincerely,

Theresa Cole

Sent from my iPhone

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**MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS****Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>**

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## In support of returning to school

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**Cereta Wills** <c\_a\_wills@yahoo.com>

Sun, Nov 8, 2020 at 8:44 PM

Reply-To: Cereta Wills &lt;c\_a\_wills@yahoo.com&gt;

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

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this email is to encourage MCPS leadership to approve the move to a full-time, in-person school schedule. It is the correct action to take to support the intellectual and emotional growth and development of our children.

The hybrid model is inadequate in providing the time and the level of instruction our children need to develop the skills necessary to advance their learning. MCPS children are falling behind their peers who are in a in-person model. We need to provide all children with opportunities to excel. This is realized in a full-time, in-person model which provides a consistent schedule, set of educators, and materials / lessons designed for our children to flourish.

I appreciate the efforts my children's school has taken to do their best with the hybrid model. I look forward to hearing this will be built upon by next allowing children to return to a full-time schedule. It is what is best for our children.

Respectfully,  
Cereta Wills

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## Kids need more in-person learning

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**L Hayhurst** <lhayhurst@gmail.com>

Mon, Nov 9, 2020 at 9:36 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Our kids, especially our K-5 students, need more than 2 days a week of in-person learning. Even with COVID-19 numbers being larger than ever, we have seen that schools are NOT superspreaders. This is illustrated by the experience of Hellgate School District right here in Missoula. There may be incidents when a school will need to shut down for a limited time. It would be far better to have one school close for a time, rather than having all schools limited to 2 days of in-person learning.

Schools provide countless benefits to our children and families including nutritional and emotional support, as well as academic instruction.

If the Board decides not all MCPS students can return to in-person learning safely, please prioritize our K-5 students.

Thank you,  
Lisa and Matt Hayhurst  
MCPS parents of a 4th grader, 8th grader and 11th grader

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11/9/2020

Missoula County Public Schools Mail - Missoula Schools

**MISSOULA COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

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## Missoula Schools

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**Sara <ssheffield2146@yahoo.com>**

**Mon, Nov 9, 2020 at 11:07 AM**

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

I am writing this as a concerned retired elementary teacher, product of Missoula Co schools, and grandmother of current students in the Msla school system.

This past year has been a most challenging time for all of us. My concern at this time is for our children who are the future of our country . They are being denied the opportunity for learning and the ability to work with others that only comes from their hours they spend in school. They will never get these years back. Being a student and then a teacher for many years, you cannot recreate a model to take the place of being in the classroom and having all the activities that go along with it. The very low medical risk does not justify taking these learning opportunities from these students that they will never get back. As you can tell I am passionate about this. Let these teachers who became teacher to make a difference in these children's lives and these kids some of whom are falling farther and farther behind go back to school full time!

Respectfully,

Sara Wood Sheffield  
67 Bay Harbor Dr.  
Bigfork, Mt. 59911

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## MOA for Spring 2021?

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**Beth Morey** <eamorey@gmail.com>

Mon, Nov 9, 2020 at 7:53 PM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, Robert Watson <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us>

As the parent of two Franklin Elementary students attending the Missoula Online Academy, I am so grateful that you've offered families this option. It's given my boys the ability to stay up to date with their studies *with* their friends from school -- an immeasurable gift.

We've enjoyed and appreciated the immense hard work from the MOA staff and teachers, especially (from our personal experience as the family of a kindergarten and 2nd grade student) Rae Cooper, Jenna Briggs, Sarah Sullivan, Kylyn Rogers, Erin Ensely, and all the MOA teachers and staff. They are amazing and my children have loved connecting with them remotely. They have made the very best of an almost impossibly difficult time. I will be forever grateful for their service.

However, I am concerned that MOA will not be renewed for Spring 2021, even though Missoula and Montana seem to be hitting new record highs of COVID-19 cases multiple times a week, or more.

What is your plan for MOA for 2021? How will you support the families who need to keep their students at home for health or other reasons?

Also, what is the benchmark for when in-person schooling will transfer to remote schooling -- how many cases in Montana/Missoula/the school before we cut our losses and, in the name of safety, go remote district-wide?

I appreciate all your hard work and am looking forward to hearing how you plan to move forward from this point.

**I beg you to please, please, please keep MOA as an option for our students of families with high-risk individuals or those who for whatever reason do not feel like in-person schooling is the right choice for them during this pandemic.**

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this.

With gratitude,

Beth Morey

Franklin Elementary parent

Montana licensed educator

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## Kids MUST return to school ASAP

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Erin Gilder <eringilder@gmail.com>

Mon, Nov 9, 2020 at 10:00 PM

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

Dear Board Members and Mr. Rob Watson

I am writing to you once more to continue to voice my numerous concerns over the current schedule for our students.

My three boys brought home their report cards from Jeannette Rankin last week. Many areas on the report card were either blank or marked NE. We received letters from their teachers stating that with only seeing the students for 20 early out days, it is impossible to keep up the curriculum. At their conferences, I followed up with them to ask when the missed instruction was going to be made up and they did not have an answer to that. I asked what would happen the following year when they start the next grade's curriculum with gaps in their learning from the previous year. They told me all students would be in the same position. Unfortunately, this is only the case for MCPS students. The majority of the other districts are in school full time, keeping up with the curriculum much better than our students are able to. Why can they return full time but not us? Learning gaps follow a student for their entire educational career if not remedied. As a former MCPS elementary teacher, current Reading Specialist, and mother of four small boys, this worries me greatly.

I understand that some teachers are reluctant to return to the classroom. Unfortunately, some jobs just cannot be done remotely. Teaching a class of at least 20 young children is one of them. My husband and I own a business that we also cannot run remotely. Everyday, my husband goes to work because our business depends on it, just like so many other businesses. Parents do not have a union, like teachers do, to advocate for our needs and our children. Our children only have us to be their advocate and it feels like our opinion doesn't matter.

My family moved to Missoula four years ago for the sole reason that we wanted our kids to attend a MCPS school. Now, we are paying taxes for schools we are only able to attend a fraction of the time. My husband and I have started the process of looking into other schooling options because these are the foundational building years of their lives. Their education isn't something we can just sit back and wait on.

Covid-19 is not something to take lightly, it is obviously a very serious problem - but we cannot willingly create more problems by not putting education first. We know children are not in the "high risk" group like elderly people or those with underlying conditions. MOA has given parents an option if they do not want their child to attend in person learning. However, the majority of parents are begging to return full time. Pediatricians are backing this decision. Mental health, for everyone, is at stake. Our household operates under tremendous stress now. I am not the mother right now that I want to be. Everyday, I am short on patience and I know they deserve better. My kids hate having to do their school work at home. The only thing they are learning is that they don't like school. We are all sick of the busy work that is supposed to supplement their missed school days. Other families, who may, but likely are not, voicing their concerns, are struggling far more than we are. Kids are going hungry, kids are being neglected, kids are becoming depressed, kids are isolated. I am tired of the carrot being dangled that we will be returning eventually to the Hybrid Plus model. We do not need to waste another week - our kids, our families, our community, needs kids back in school.

Thank you for your time,  
Erin Gilder

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## Please consider Hybrid plus or Full time in person learning

Stephanie Whiteman <mannavisions@gmail.com>

Mon, Nov 9, 2020 at 11:00 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, rwatson@mcpsmt.org, rlodge@mcpsmt.org

MCPS Board of Trustees,

I am writing to you with experience from many different perspectives about moving from the hybrid schedule to hybrid plus or full time in person learning. Both my husband and I are current and/or past educators. My husband has taught music for the past 15 years and is currently an administrator in MCPS. I taught high school English for many years before I took time off to raise our children. We are parents to a 4th grader and Kindergartener at Jeannette Rankin. I believe it is important to share how the hybrid schedule has not been successful in our family because I know for a fact that other families share our same experience. Many of the families I have spoken with do not feel comfortable sharing their experience because of the public stigma that "people who think students should be in school, do not care about the safety and wellbeing of others." This could not be farther from the truth, and in fact, I am deeply concerned about the entire health of our community of learners, especially their mental health.

For the first 2.5 months of school, my children have basically had a 5 day weekend every week. The work that they received was not "viable" nor "guaranteed" curriculum that the district requires in order to keep its funding. The teachers were doing their absolute best to provide work while being placed in an extremely difficult position. The teachers were not provided the online curriculum training (in our kindergartener's case) until after the school year started, which unfortunately set them back from receiving any form of online learning until just in recent weeks. Up until now it took my kindergartener about 15 minutes to do all 3 days of handouts that were given to him. I believe the hybrid model is doing the most damage to these younger students. Kindergarten in particular focuses heavily on the social, emotional, and behavioral experiences that first year. They are supposed to be learning how to function in a school setting, interacting with their peers and learning procedures at school that will carry them successfully through the rest of their early education. They simply cannot learn these at home. My 4th grader finishes her work in about 20-30 minutes. Her assignments were also mostly review based, no new information was presented. She is a high level learner and is really struggling with engagement at home. Also, my children don't have direct and timely access to their teachers on the online learning days due to their teachers teaching in person to the other half of the alphabet; which I have noticed is a big disadvantage. If they have questions or technical glitches, the teachers don't have the opportunity to answer back as soon as it is needed. I see my children falling more and more behind each day and this cannot continue for much longer without major consequences for learning.

My family is incredibly blessed to have the support system in place to make this schedule work. We live in a safe neighborhood, with a warm house and plenty of food in the fridge. We have two educators at home, one full time, to help our students with their school work. We have a pair of grandparents who live less than five minutes away who are willing and able to help out with driving, pickup, dropoff, etc.. Our house has high speed wifi and a laptop for our children to use. Each of our children has their own bookshelf full of books for their appropriate reading level, and scores more in boxes. Even with all of these benefits, the Hybrid schedule **IS NOT** working for our family. People and studies have suggested that a schedule will help kids be more successful. We have tried every schedule that our family can do since last March, with little success. The lack of schedule/routine that our children are missing is deeply affecting them.

As I previously stated my husband is an administrator and I absolutely understand and value the health and safety of all students and staff. I believe the staff in the district is doing an amazing job of keeping everyone safe with all of the protocols and cleaning procedures they have in place. If you look at the data for the cases in our schools currently, the transmission rate within the schools is almost zero. Students and staff that are contracting the virus are contracting it outside of school. The schools are doing an excellent job of managing each case that comes up with quarantining, cleaning and protocols. Logic would show that if the transmission rate is low in school and high outside of school, then we should be spending more time in school. It may sound counterintuitive, but when students are in school, they are supervised, follow guidelines and protocols, in addition to all of the "known" benefits of in person education. It is for this reason that I feel our students and staff are more safe in the schools than out in other public settings. When school continues to be in hybrid mode, parents are forced to find outside care for their children and these outside care places may not have the same high standards as our schools do. The exposure rate becomes much higher and more

unpredictable. Children are mixing with many more children from all different schools than they would be with their smaller, more controlled classroom in their home school.

Lastly, I would like to point out that anyone who did not feel that their children were safe with in-person learning this year were given the option to "opt out" and participate in the online learning through the Missoula Online Academy. An incredibly large amount of money was spent (and is still being spent) to ensure that staff, students, and families who opted out of in-person education were given every opportunity to be successful in a remote environment. Synchronous and asynchronous curriculums were researched, purchased and delivered to students by specifically hired teachers who had been given professional development to deliver the curriculum. **Staff who remained in buildings, received little to no professional development on remote learning and are essentially asked to do the work of two full time teachers.** Teachers were also given the choice to voice their concern with teaching in person in early August and most of those requests were able to be honored. Those of us that are left at the school (teachers and students) actually want to be there. My family was never given a choice to fully "opt in". We are at the mercy of the board decisions to either remain in hybrid or not. Please consider moving to hybrid plus or full time at this time for the benefit of our students and staff.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Stephanie Whiteman

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

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**Re: MOA for Spring 2021?**

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**Beth Morey** <eamorey@gmail.com>

Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 9:19 AM

To: Robert Watson &lt;rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us&gt;, publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us

What empirical evidence supports your statement that schools are not spreading COVID? We've had multiple cases in every school and our county and state numbers are skyrocketing, with our hospitals beginning to fill up.

Thank you so much for taking the time to clarify this for me. I truly appreciate it and look forward to your reply.

Beth Morey  
Franklin Elementary parent  
Montana licensed educator

Sent from my iPhone

On Nov 10, 2020, at 8:00 AM, Robert Watson <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us> wrote:

Hi Beth,

We will be making some final decisions and announcements about the MOA in the coming weeks. I anticipate we will be able to make an official announcement during the first week of December.

Regarding the move to remote learning, I don't anticipate the Board will move to remote learning, unless ordered by the Governor's office or local health department, as the hybrid model is working for many students and we are seeing very little transmission related to in-person learning.

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**From:** Beth Morey <eamorey@gmail.com>

**Date:** Monday, November 9, 2020 at 7:53 PM

**To:** "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, Robert Watson <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us>

**Subject:** MOA for Spring 2021?

Warning!

This message originates from OUTSIDE the District's email system. Please verify the sender and contents before opening attachments or clicking any links. Contact the IT Help Desk at 406-728-2400 x7777 with any questions.

As the parent of two Franklin Elementary students attending the Missoula Online Academy, I am so grateful that you've offered families this option. It's given my boys the ability to stay up to date with their studies *with* their friends from school -- an immeasurable gift.

We've enjoyed and appreciated the immense hard work from the MOA staff and teachers, especially (from our personal experience as the family of a kindergarten and 2nd grade student) Rae Cooper, Jenna Briggs, Sarah Sullivan, Kylyn Rogers, Erin Ensely, and all the MOA teachers and staff. They are amazing and my children have loved connecting with them remotely. They have made the very best of an almost impossibly difficult time. I will be forever grateful for their service.

However, I am concerned that MOA will not be renewed for Spring 2021, even though Missoula and Montana seem to be hitting new record highs of COVID-19 cases multiple times a week, or more.

What is your plan for MOA for 2021? How will you support the families who need to keep their students at home for health or other reasons?

Also, what is the benchmark for when in-person schooling will transfer to remote schooling -- how many cases in Montana/Missoula/the school before we cut our losses and, in the name of safety, go remote district-wide?

I appreciate all your hard work and am looking forward to hearing how you plan to move forward from this point.

**I beg you to please, please, please keep MOA as an option for our students of families with high-risk individuals or those who for whatever reason do not feel like in-person schooling is the right choice for them during this pandemic.**

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this.

With gratitude,

Beth Morey

Franklin Elementary parent

Montana licensed educator



Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## Holidays

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rebecca nasgovitz <rebecca@cherrypines.com>

Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 10:00 AM

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

Hello,

First off, thank you for doing such a great job during these difficult times. It is impressive to see such care given to tracking and preventing spread in our schools as well as prioritizing mental health. A difficult balancing act. That said, I am curious if there has been any thought given to the idea of having students completely remote for the few weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas? Extra curricular activities suspended or practiced online in those weeks as well? U of M will be wrapping up their semester at that point and it seems like if we tried a bit harder as a community we could maybe get the virus under control with a strong plan? Average daily new cases have consistently been way over our goal of less than 25. More stringent policies seem necessary. Missoula's reactionary style doesn't seem to be hampering the spread. Just a thought.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Rebecca Nasgovitz

Sent from my iPhone

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**MCPS Kids in school**

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**Carlett Hogan** <carletthogan@yahoo.com>

Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 11:17 AM

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

I'm not writing this comment because I need my kids back in school so I can work. I feel for those parents and I don't know how they do it....I'm writing this because I have a Sophomore boy that needs to be back in school with a lot more structure then going to school at 1:00 PM till 3:30 PM on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I also need my Senior back in school to get her ready for collage next year. My A student is struggling with lack of communications with the teachers, she reaches out by emails and sometimes she doesn't hear back from them for a week, she often has teachers that forget to explain their expectations (or maybe explained to one group but not the other) and later deducts points for not doing it right when the entire class did it wrong, I feel for the teachers I know they have group A & B and they themselves weren't taught to teach this way. We are doing a disservice to our kids by not getting them back in school fulltime. For those that are scared to get the virus and/or have underlined conditions stay home and do online schooling. Valley Christian and Lola have been back fulltime since the beginning of the year and they seem to be handling it well. Lets follow their example and get our kids back in school fulltime.

Thank you for your time  
Carlett Hogan  
Parent at Sentinel High School

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Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## 4 days please

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**Michelle Cooney** <mrcooney@mcpsmt.org>

Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 11:31 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, Robert Watson <rwatson@mcpsmt.org>

I'd highly encourage you to consider deciding to send ALL children to school 4 days a week. The lack of education these children are getting is sickening. Some teachers can't teach like this and put on movies for 2 hours or videos of English. How can you test after that and 5 days later no less. And we're not all in the same boat. Some schools in Missoula are going 5 days and will get a far superior education to MCPS students.

If Resource and Specials can go 4 days I don't think we should discriminate against the other children who clearly need services just as badly.

Not to mention their mental health. They are struggling. On purpose. From your decision.

It's YOUR decision to help them or torture them.

If parents are too scared to send their kids 4 days, there are options for them!

Please highly consider 4 days.

Thank you!

Michelle Cooney

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

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## Discontinuation of payroll for substitute custodians on remote learning days & school breaks

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

Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 12:35 PM

Greetings!

Please at tonight's meeting question with concern and overturn the recent savings plan to---of all things---discontinue payroll allocations for substitute janitors dispatched on remote learning days (Mondays) and all school breaks.

These are critical days in cleaning to combat community spread of Covid -19. The parents of MCPS children and the Missoula Community at large were tacitly (if not explicitly) told that "deep cleaning" would become standard protocol for all schools.

Removing financing from the substitute custodian budget (where the average substitute makes \$12.50 per hour) is not fulfilling this promise. More to the point, it places the student and staff at increased risk at a time when it is most critical.

Cleaning in a building without students/staff allows us to shampoo carpets, use stronger cleansers with the potential for respiratory irritation and truly be effective. Much of this work requires two people to be conducted safely and within the limited time.

Please help administration target other areas for salary elimination. We custodians have watched two more layers of administrative oversight be established at an estimated cost of over \$90,000.00. Clearly Covid money was intended for Covid cleaning, not merely the administrative discussion of cleaning in the abstract.

With respect and inexpressible gratitude for your donated time.

Daniel Geary

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

Ralph Nader

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Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

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## education

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Carole Haidle <carolehaidle@yahoo.com>

Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 1:24 PM

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

To Whom it May Concern,

This letter is from a concerned parent of an 8th grader and High School sophomore in the MCPS system.

As the pandemic continues its taking its toll on my childrens' education and confidence in their ability to perform and focus on school.

The frustrations, discouragement, sadness, anger, hopeless feeling etc.. is becoming intense as these kids try to navigate thru Covid19.

My kids miss their teachers and peers and thrive on the presence of having their teacher available in person to help guide them thru their education.

My kids understand the important of masking and following the mandates and rules dictated to them and our community. They would love, appreciate and be respectful of their peers, educators, helpers, etc.... knowing how important it is to help keep everyone safe.

Having a 5 day school week with the option of an online academy would be very welcomed options for both sides of the spectrum. And a huge step into moving forward with our lives thru these Covid time.

I/we appreciation everything everyone has done so for the help our youth feel as "normal" and safe as can be for the past several months.

Please consider opening the education back up to 5 days per week for those educators and students who feel comfortable masking up and continuing on with life the best we can given the current circumstances.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Carole Haidle

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## Coronavirus Effect on Kids Mental Health - The Need to Reopen Schools

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Kerry and Phyllis Schaefer <schaeferspk@gmail.com>

Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 6:25 PM

To: "rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us" <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us>, Public Comment <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

?"

As a former elementary school guidance counselor for 18 years in a AA Montana school and a Grandparent, I am writing to express my concerns regarding the coronavirus effects on kids mental health, and why I believe the school district needs to consider more in school learning days per week.

As we know, the coronavirus affects all ages, however, the disease has shown to particularly affect those 70 and older as especially high risk for hospitalization and death. Those 18 and under seem to be least affected and are more likely to experience milder symptoms or none at all. \_

*Now, for the however.*

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Covid-19 may have limited effects on kid's bodies, but it's not being nearly so kind to their minds. No one is immune to the stress that has come with this pandemic. My experiences as a guidance counselor show that when children lose their daily structure and routine, that when uncertainty sets in and destroys what they can count on in their lives as consistent for success, safety and health, they are shaken mentally and emotionally. Not only is there the fear of this disease itself, but the lock-downs, the quarantines, being removed from their school environment and their friends, and anxiety because things are out of control are all taking their toll on kids. When I asked our 11 year old grandson what he thought about Covid 19, his response was: *"I'm afraid for myself, my parents and family. What if we get sick?"* Yes, a normal response by a child to something that brings no sense or normalcy to his life.

*Let's add a little more stress to their lives, ready:*

Has a parent lost his/her job? Is there enough food? Is there enough money to pay bills? Will we have to move? Yes, the economy is a victim of this pandemic which continues to struggle. In 2018, a paper published in Health Economics, written by Golberstein and co-authors studied economic conditions and found that during the Great Recession, a 5% increase in the national unemployment rate correlated with an astounding 35% to 50% increase in "*clinically meaningful childhood mental-health problems.*" With the unemployment rate during the pandemic exceeding an all time high of 14%, Golberstein expects to see more of the same emotional blowback. *"When the economy is in a bad place, kids' mental health gets worse," he says. "This time is going to be much worse because it's also a pandemic."*

*How about a few more stressors, ready:*

Separation from friends brings on loneliness. Being homebound with parents who are not working or are working at home, who are taking on "teaching responsibilities while being untrained" is extremely stressful for families. Children become clingier, more emotional and meltdowns are frequent, screen time exposure becomes greater in order to combat the loneliness. Being with parents for most teens is a downside while being with friends is everything. Socializing, regardless of age, is essential and that includes for parents, too. Family relationships become strained, moodiness is more frequent, anxiousness is heightened, sleeping difficulties emerge, parents emotional and mental limits are noticeably strained.....need I say more?

People are used to congregating, going to church, being together at sporting events, gathering for backyard barbeques, going to weddings, attending school functions, and for children, most importantly: Going to School. Learning in Person. Being with their friends.

If there is one thing that is for sure, the negative impact on a young person's mind and their mental and emotional health, is not going to stop completely until the spread of Covid\_19 does. Therefore, engage children's minds, let them be social, give them a measure of control and a sense of mental and emotional security and healthiness by returning to more in school days. Give them the opportunity to be resilient, by regaining some structure and routine that is healthy and promotes success.

I worry that if we do not, anxiety and depression, not to mention the mental impact that accompanies the challenges of learning at home and the yet to be determined

losses in learning, will in themselves become challenges of the future. The pandemic is a traumatic situation for all: parents, grandparents, educators, all school personnel and the community. But, one thing I know through my experiences as a school guidance counselor, trauma impacts children mentally and emotionally through their losses. Mitigate these losses by giving them the stability of friendships, in person learning, routine and structure, a "real teacher" and the reassurance of safety.

Thank you for doing the best you can for our children's learning, mental, social and emotional health.

Sincerely,

Phyllis J. Schaefer

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Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 8:48 PM

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<b><u>New Cases by Week</u></b>							
<b>Summary</b>	<b>Gr K-5</b>	<b>GR 6-8</b>	<b>Gr 9-12</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Total New Cases by Week</b>		
8/26 - 9/25	0	0	5	3	8		
9/28-10/4	1	1	8	9	19		
10/5-10/11	4	1	6	3	14		
10/12 - 10/17	7	2	6	3	18		
10/18 - 10/25	6	2	10	5	23		
10/26 - 11/2	5	2	3	0	10		
11/3 - 11/9	6	2	4	9	21		
				total	113		
<b><u>Active Cases in MCPS</u></b>		<b><u>Active Cases per 10K in Missoula County</u></b>					
10/11	12	10/11	44.3				
10/17	18	10/17	44.1				
10/25	15	10/25	64.2				
11/1	12	11/1	76.6				
11/9	16	11/9	75.6				
<b><u>Cause of Transmission</u></b>		10/11	10/15	10/26	11/2	11/9	
Through school or school activity		17%	15%	12%	10%	5%	
Transmission outside of school		81%	78%	81%	78%	70%	

Unknown cause of transmission				2%	7%		7%	12%	25%
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The second chart shows a comparison between MCPS and other large school districts around the state. I believe our low case numbers are a reflection of less transmission in schools, but I am not an expert in COVID transmission. I have discussed this topic with the county health department. They have generally agreed that we are not contributing to the spread in our community, but the spread in our community is causing cases to appear in our schools.

	MCPS	Helena	Kalispell	Great Falls
Approx District Size	9000	8000	6000	10500
County Incident Rate	57.1	65.3	86.3	107.3
In-Person Schedule	Hybrid	Hybrid	Every Day	Every Day
Total Active Cases	16	46	30	83
Active Elem	9	16	3	42 (K-6)
Active MS	1	13	8	18 (7-8)
Active HS	6	17	19	23 (9-12)

I would be happy to discuss further on the phone if you have any questions or further comments.

Thanks, Rob Watson, Superintendent

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**From:** Beth Morey <eamorey@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 9:20 AM  
**To:** Robert Watson <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us>, "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>  
**Subject:** Re: MOA for Spring 2021?

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What empirical evidence supports your statement that schools are not spreading COVID? We've had multiple cases in every school and our county and state numbers are skyrocketing, with our hospitals beginning to fill up.

Thank you so much for taking the time to clarify this for me. I truly appreciate it and look forward to your reply.

Beth Morey

Franklin Elementary parent

Montana licensed educator

Sent from my iPhone

On Nov 10, 2020, at 8:00 AM, Robert Watson <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us> wrote:

Hi Beth,

We will be making some final decisions and announcements about the MOA in the coming weeks. I anticipate we will be able to make an official announcement during the first week of December.

Regarding the move to remote learning, I don't anticipate the Board will move to remote learning, unless ordered by the Governor's office or local health department, as the hybrid model is working for many students and we are seeing very little transmission related to in-person learning.

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**From:** Beth Morey <eamorey@gmail.com>

**Date:** Monday, November 9, 2020 at 7:53 PM

**To:** "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>, Robert Watson <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us>

**Subject:** MOA for Spring 2021?

Warning!

This message originates from OUTSIDE the District's email system. Please verify the sender and contents before opening attachments or clicking any links. Contact the IT Help Desk at 406-728-2400 x7777 with any questions.

As the parent of two Franklin Elementary students attending the Missoula Online Academy, I am so grateful that you've offered families this option. It's given my boys the ability to stay up to date with their studies *with* their friends from school -- an immeasurable gift.

We've enjoyed and appreciated the immense hard work from the MOA staff and teachers, especially (from our personal experience as the family of a kindergarten and 2nd grade student) Rae Cooper, Jenna Briggs, Sarah Sullivan, Kyn Rogers, Erin Ensely, and all the MOA teachers and staff. They are amazing and my children have loved connecting with them remotely. They have made the very best of an almost impossibly difficult time. I will be forever grateful for their service.

However, I am concerned that MOA will not be renewed for Spring 2021, even though Missoula and Montana seem to be hitting new record highs of COVID-19 cases multiple times a week, or more.

What is your plan for MOA for 2021? How will you support the families who need to keep their students at home for health or other reasons?

Also, what is the benchmark for when in-person schooling will transfer to remote schooling -- how many cases in Montana/Missoula/the school before we cut our losses and, in the name of safety, go remote district-wide?

I appreciate all your hard work and am looking forward to hearing how you plan to move forward from this point.

**I beg you to please, please, please keep MOA as an option for our students of families with high-risk individuals or those who for whatever reason do not feel like in-person schooling is the right choice for them during this pandemic.**

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this.

With gratitude,

Beth Morey

Franklin Elementary parent

Montana licensed educator