
Re: School Board - Comments/Considerations

Kerry Herndon <collaborative.effort@gmail.com>
To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, rwatson@mcpsmt.org
Cc: Becky Sorenson <bsorenson@mcps.k12.mt.us>

Fri, Feb 26, 2021 at 9:02 AM

I know there has been some recent dialogue about kids returning to school 5 days per week. My kids attention and motivation for school has dramatically improved since returning 4 days per week. The remote days are still extremely difficult. My elementary kids just do not learn well @ home no matter the effort.

If kids are expected to do roughly 2 hrs of work per day on remote days, rather than attending school on Monday why don't you extend the school day by 30min on the 4 days of in-person learning. They would get so much more out of it than the remote materials being provided. (Especially for my 2 kids with IEPs).

My kids are eager learners & excel in the classroom. They are also well behaved at school & home. At home, while I am trying to work remotely, we end up spending the bulk of our time together in a battle over school assignments. It has changed our relationship dramatically. They definitely all have experienced some anxieties, self-esteem issues and some behavioral issues while in a remote learning model.

Ideally they would return to school 5 days per week with the full # of hours each day. But if that is not possible, please consider extending the school day by 30min to decrease the amount of stress on families during the Mondays kids are home while parents are trying to work (at least for elementary students who are so much more reliant on hands on instruction).

Thank You,
Kerry Herndon

Sent from my iPhone

(no subject)

Craig, Bill <Bill.Craig@tetrattech.com>
To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Mon, Mar 1, 2021 at 4:37 PM

Mr. Watson, MCPS Covid Task Force and MCPS Board of Trustees,

Over the last 2 weeks there have been what? 17 new cases Grades 9-12. This is deemed insignificant? Look at your own data. You have to go back to week of Dec 12 to exceed the number of new cases in Missoula high schools... INSIGNIFICANT.....what planet did you learn statistics on???

Some of these people you represent are legal adults. For YOU to tell the students and in particular the legal adults student that they don't have a say in these issues is shameful. Shame on you MCPS.

Regards,

Bill Craig

William Craig, LG, LHG | Hydrogeologist, Project Manager

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Going back to 5 days of synchronous learning per week

Beth Morey <eamorey@gmail.com>

Tue, Mar 2, 2021 at 10:26 AM

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

I am writing in regard to the new and sudden shift to return to 5 days of synchronous learning per week for MCPS and MOA.

I strongly this occurring three-quarters of the way through the academic year, with a mere two week's notice. That is not enough notice for working caregivers, particularly those with students in MOA.

Everyone is in a solid routine.
Everyone has been through hell.
A lot of people are still going through hell.

We've all got our plates balanced and spinning — barely, but we're doing it. This schedule change stands to upend that hard-won balance for students, teachers, and families. It feels cruel.

Save this for 2021-2022. Stop.

Elizabeth Morey
MOA parent / Franklin Elementary

Beth Morey <eamorey@gmail.com>

Tue, Mar 2, 2021 at 10:32 AM

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

Sorry, correction — you have 4 weeks of notice, which is better. But I stand by the fact that changing the schedule for the last quarter of the school year feels cruel. Wait until the next academic year.

Sent from my iPhone

> On Mar 2, 2021, at 10:26 AM, Beth Morey <eamorey@gmail.com> wrote:

>

> I am writing in regard to the new and sudden shift to return to 5 days of synchronous learning per week for MCPS and MOA.

[Quoted text hidden]

Synchronous Mondays

Ana Beard <ana.j.beard@gmail.com>

Tue, Mar 2, 2021 at 11:43 AM

To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org, Rae Cooper <rcooper@mcpsmt.org>, Jenna Briggs <jkbriggs@mcpsmt.org>, rlodge@mcpsmt.org

I am reaching out to express support in MOA considering keeping Mondays *asynchronous*.

As a separated household, asynchronous days are the only day that my kids are not burnt out on zoom calls and screen time and stressed about making it to everything on time. My children participate better on asynchronous days, and engage without our family and each other in kinder, more patient ways. This is our day to connect, to catch up, and our one opportunity for some good chunks of play. As a family with children with special needs, this is the one day we can fit in additional medical/therapy appts without disrupting synchronous learning or without having both children having meltdowns of having to go to appts after a day of staring at a screen and headaches. I am disappointed that moving to synchronous Mondays did not include family input or feedback on the MOA-level, as most of the families we interact with are now stressed and upset about the idea of changing the routine up again. My decision to utilize MOA was because it felt like the one option that would provide my kids with a sense of consistency in routine and i know how incredibly important that is to our family and our mental health, but now to think about switching up a schedule that took THIS LONG to get used to, and after spring break (where regressions and routine are already in a fragile spot) no less.

As it stands, my children will be missing their afternoon meeting every week for school-provided speech therapy, which will only get them behind further (something we are already working REALLY hard to support, after my fourth grader has gotten completely buried in school work multiple times and had multiple depressive/shame dips as a result of feeling overwhelmed and overworked.) We won't be able to make it to physical therapy in the afternoons because the children will be burnt out from lessons already.

I also feel this is not supportive of the teachers who are working for MOA. I understand that this is a day that teachers have utilized and have needed for planning and their own meetings and what not. This work has taken a lot of additional time and energy and it does not feel fair or supportive of our hardworking and overworked teachers.

Ana Beard
(she/they)

sent from my phone

The Importance of Educator Voice

Kathryn "KaCee" Ballou <kcballou@mcpsmt.org>
Bcc: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Wed, Mar 3, 2021 at 7:53 PM

Greetings!

In light of the reactions the spring school schedules may well bring your way - from others or your own reaction - I wanted to make sure that you had some information.

As we went into this process, MEA sent a survey to members about the transition to Phase 2, use of Mondays, and needs of our members. When the results came back showing that 81% of our educators saw Mondays as essential work time to do our best for and with our students and that 41% of our teachers were working six or more hours per week beyond the contract even with Mondays, we knew that we needed to address the very real need. You can find the [full summary of that MEA survey here](#).

As we work with the district, our union knows that the end goal of our conversations and negotiations is always to do what is best for our students. As union president, it is my duty to ensure that our teachers have what they need in order to do their best work with and for students. The true power of the union for me as a teacher is that I had elected union officers who ensured that they advocated, worked, and fought to make sure that I had what I needed to do my best work; they took on the work of being my voice with admin and the community so that I could focus on my students. I now have the honor of representing the teacher voice from our 700+ dedicated teachers so that they can focus their time and energy on working with students. I serve to remind you, admin, and our community that teachers are kind, caring, passionate, knowledgeable professionals dedicated to the success of all of our students - our kids. And I serve to remind you that these professional educators are also humans - struggling their way through a pandemic in their roles of teacher, parent, student, child, siblings, and engaged community members. We come to work to do our best each and every day, and we go home to do the same with our families, friends, and communities.

When I went to the table to negotiate the spring schedule with the district on behalf of these amazing educators, the goal was to meet the needs of all sides. I went to ensure that students, staff, families, and the community were well served by the schedule; that we gave teachers what they needed to serve their students and that we had a schedule that would be set so that everyone could be assured that there would be that predictable schedule we have all been yearning for, so that we could all plan and get into the routine for the remaining months of school. We began negotiations on Wednesday 2/17, and by Friday 2/19 we had a final agreement that met those criteria for the union and the district.

On Tuesday 2/23, I was surprised by a request of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and HR director to return to the table. It had come to their attention that morning that there was an issue with the community partners providing child care that would be a huge burden on many of our families with young students. Holding true to the stance of the union to do what is best for our students, staff, families, and community, a statement I reiterated in an interview that would be broadcast on KPAX that evening, I went to my MEA exec board and we agreed to return to the table.

In short, the agreement we finalized on Friday 2/26 represents MEA's commitment to do what is best for students, staff, families, and the community, but also our commitment to work with the district in good faith. I

count on the district and on you as trustees to help to share this same message with the community. In order to continue the amazing work we do together to ensure that our students are cared for - academically, socially, and emotionally - we have to work to ensure that our teachers are taken care of, that they feel heard and valued as the professionals they are. Our educator voice is essential to the success of our students and our district.

Teaching is this strange and awesome profession. Our community members have all spent quite a bit of time - 13 years - as students, observing the job. And yet, they have only seen half of it. The work that goes unseen - the planning, the adjustments, the research, the communication, the emails and calls, the collaboration, the training, the grading, and the connections are all done in the time we have without students. As so many parents have pointed out, when you are the teacher or learning coach for your student, it is nearly impossible to do much else - all your energy and attention is focused on that student, their needs, and their questions. It is the same in the classroom. When those 17, 24, or 28 students enter my classroom, they deserve and get my full attention. The work that goes into making sure those students are well taken care of and served happens behind the scenes, when classrooms are empty and quiet. The union, district, and school board need to work together to make sure that teachers have the time and resources they need to serve our students.

Thanks for all of your hard work and dedication - as school board members who are also humans working through this pandemic.

Please reach out with any questions, concerns, or thoughts you have about the spring schedule or anything else. I am happy to talk on the phone (406.207.3140), text, email, or meet virtually or in person with you anytime!

All my best,

KaCee Ballou

President, Missoula Education Association

1001 SW Higgins, Ste 101

Missoula MT 59803

406.207.3140 (cell)

kcballou@mcpsmt.org

kcbUnionStrong@gmail.com

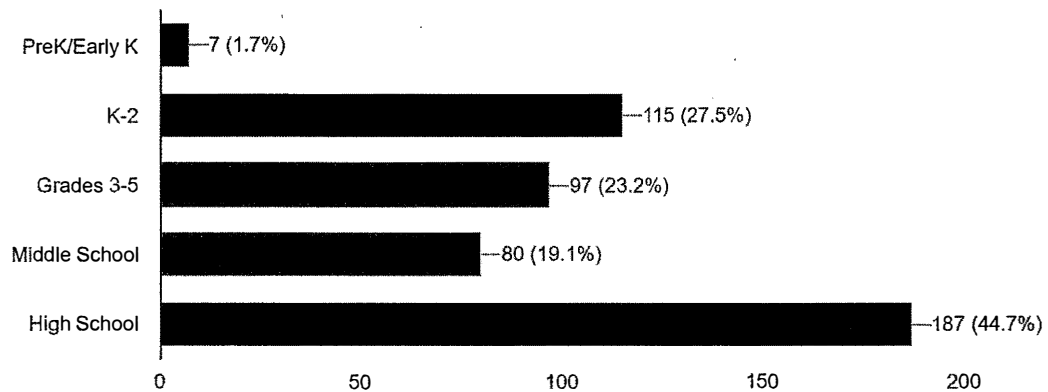
Summary of MCPS Move to Phase 2 Survey of Missoula Education Association Members

The survey was opened on Monday, January 25, 2021 and remained open for about 30 hours for responses, closing at 4:15 pm on Tuesday, January 26, 2021. During that time 418 responses were gathered from our approximately 710 certified staff members of Missoula County Public Schools, a response rate of 59%.

Survey Demographics:

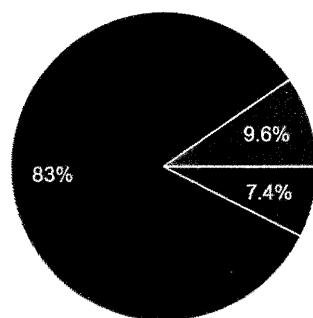
I work in the following setting(s):

418 responses



I work exclusively as part of the MOA (Missoula Online Academy).

418 responses

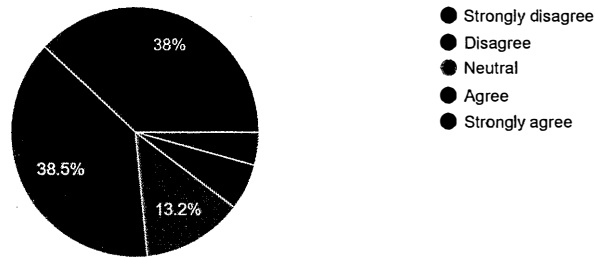


- Yes.
- No, I work in a brick and mortar school this year.
- No, I work with both MOA and in person students this year.

The next questions were used at the end of the school year in a survey given by the district:

I worry about the impact the coronavirus may have on my own health.

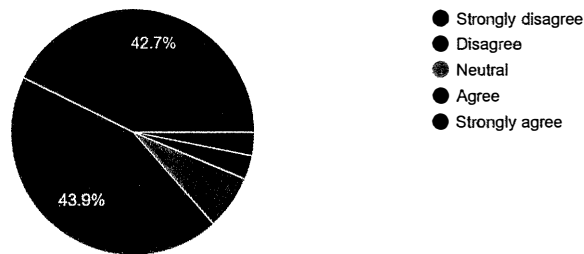
418 responses



76.5% of our MEA members are concerned about the impact COVID-19 will have on their own health. This is an increase from the 59.2% concerned about their health on the June survey, and holds about the same as the 80.5% concerned with their health in our August survey.

I am concerned about the impact the coronavirus will have on my school or on the district.

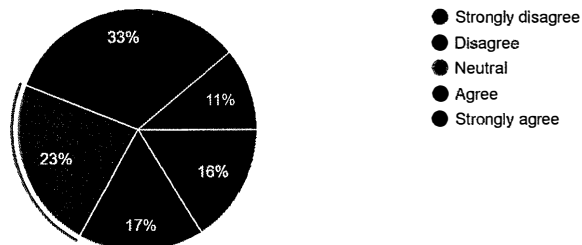
417 responses



86.6% of respondents are concerned about the impact of the virus on their school or MCPS, which is in line with both previous surveys - in June 91.9% and in August 90% showed concern.

I feel confident that I can return to work in the new phase based on my own health and members of my household.

418 responses

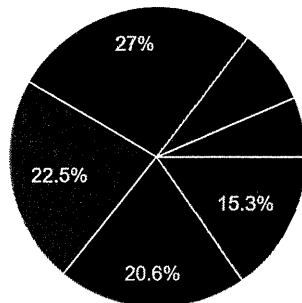


In June, 66.1% of staff were confident they could return to work in the fall based on their health and that of their family members. In August, 43.8% were confident. Currently, 44% are confident they can return under the new phase given their health and those of their family members.

Regarding the MCPS Return to School Phase 2 Planning and Guidance

My school has a plan for students returning under phase 2 that will keep students and staff safe.

418 responses



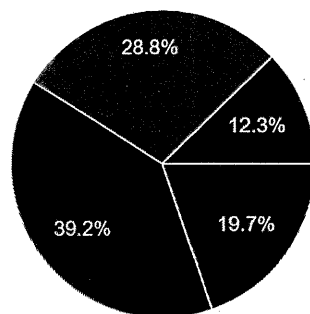
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Not applicable or prefer not to answer

As we enter buildings with more students, more days, concerns are still present for student and staff safety for 35.9% of respondents. 35.1% believe that plans are safe.

As we work to ensure that students and staff feel supported and are able to do their jobs to the best of their ability, we asked about workload under the current schedule.

Under the current schedule, in a typical week, please estimate the number of additional hours you work outside of the contract day (before 8am, after 4pm, weekends).

416 responses

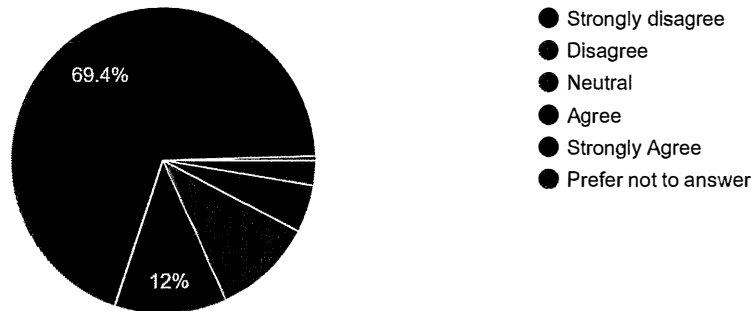


- 0-2 hours per week
- 3-5 hours per week
- 6-10 hours per week
- 11+ hours per week

Currently, staff have Mondays – with part of the day dedicated to district and building meetings and tasks, part of the day dedicated to remote learning setup and work, and part that they are able to use to prep and work. Even with this time, the majority of our educators are working beyond the 40 hour work week, with 41.1% reporting they are working 6 or more hours per week beyond the contract time.

Mondays need to stay remote days moving forward.

418 responses



Under our current work conditions, 81.4% of our educators reported that Mondays need to stay remote work days moving forward, echoed in their current additional time worked along with safety concerns, among other things.

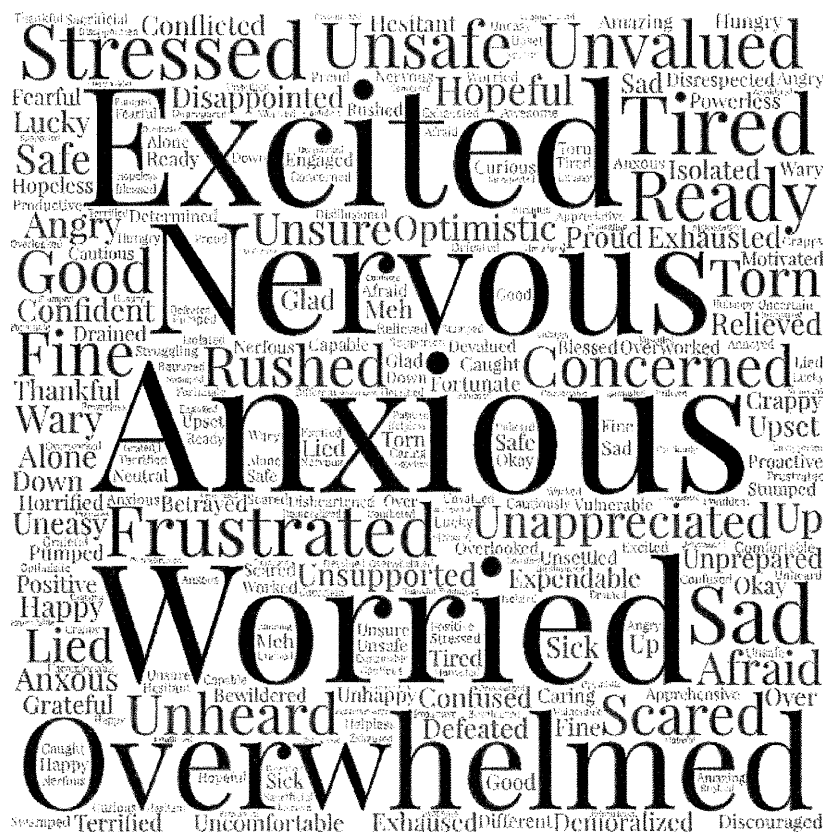
When give the prompt “**On Mondays, I work on the following**” the top responses, all with over 66%, included:

- Prepare lessons for the coming week;
- Communicate with students and/or parents;
- Grade and assess student work;
- Meet with my PLC/Team/Department;
- Attend building staff meetings;
- Prepare work for absent students.

Also mentioned quite frequently were other types of meetings, including building level leadership teams, district meetings, and student-centered meetings such as IEPs. 38.5% of our educators also clean/sanitize their room and/or supplies and 35% meet directly with students live and/or in person on Mondays.

The next section gave educators two open-ended sentence starters.

When given the starter “Today I feel...”, teachers responded most frequently with the terms anxious, excited, worried, overwhelmed, and nervous. It is of note that often excited was used in combination with worried or nervous.



Highlights from the “Today I feel” prompts include:

- “anxious about losing Mondays...I'm strictly MOA and used to work 13 hour days with one short cry per day. When they gave us asynchronous Mondays, it changed my life. The thought of losing that Monday fills me with anxiety and shows that the administration does not understand our workload.”
- “Like educators lives have been devalued. I may or may not stay in this setting..”
- “Frustrated that we cannot possibly social distance students even 3 feet at the high school, we have no clear plan for passing periods and lunch, and yet we have a set date on going back that does not take into account the MAJOR differences between 1,000 high school students in a building attending 4 periods per day with different groups versus 350 or so elementary students who stay in a single classroom. Additionally, Big Sky does not have building specific data from Burley about the air exchanges in classrooms and common spaces which is HIGHLY important because of the lack of windows in most classrooms, common areas, etc.”
- “excited to be returning to a more "normal" schedule this semester. I think research points to this being the best step for MCPS. HOWEVER, I am fortunate in that I have plenty of space for my allotted students. Many of the very small rooms in my building are presenting problems for my colleagues, and I recognize that. I also am frustrated that we've had so little time to prepare for this major switch. I recognize that MCPS is trying to navigate uncharted waters here, but it's crazy that we're being asked to rewrite our curricula, plans, etc. again - both for a three-period

day, and now for four days in person. We still don't have an answer about if we'll be losing Mondays, and it seems like Dr. Watson might just spring that decision on us at the last minute, too, giving us no time to prepare. Losing Mondays would be devastating. It's our only chance to figure out how to completely redo our entire jobs. It's also hard being bad-mouthed by certain parent groups in the community. Morale is really low."

- "That no teacher is less valuable than any student. Students need to be in schools, but all of us, including teachers, need to be safe."
- "Disappointed that we are being asked back without the vaccine. Don't feel valued by the board or superintendent. Attended one Covid task force and was upset that there were two questions asked and two preselected people responded by what they heard. It took up the whole hour. Not sure how I feel about the task force? What is it that they are doing to protect teachers? Upset that a fellow teacher quit. Upset that some that were granted the staying home option are out and about--I heard they had their Dr write a note about anxiety. Guess what, we all have anxiety! At my Dr appt last week the Dr suggested I get counseling. All because of Covid and not feeling safe here."
- "Disappointed and frustrated that all grade levels are being treated the same when that was not the original plan set forth by the district. Excited to see more students in person on a regular basis but cautious about the uncertainty moving forward."
- "different then I did yesterday, and different then I felt the day before, because information we get from science continues to change...."
- "grateful for a job I love. I'm proud to serve my community, even though it's hard sometimes. Tomorrow, I get to spend my working day in a beautiful room with beloved students, teaching a subject I'm passionate about and I'm committed to keeping my focus on those things, no matter how many days per week I'm there. I'd like to see the energy that's going into the uproar over Mondays transfer to an enthusiastic exchange of ideas about curriculum and mental health."
- "unsure. I feel there are a lot of unknowns and challenges ahead. I love the saying that keeps being shared, 'We are trying to build the plane as we are flying it.'"
- "I am confident in our ability to return to a 4 day week. I think given the stress and minimal prep of the day, it is greatly appreciated to have Mondays as a day to refresh/invigorate/regroup/plan for thoughtful education. I do worry about the new strains of the virus and how slow the board is to make decisions should we need to pull back once we get the new strains introduced into our community."
- "Cautiously optimistic. I'm excited for kids to return and to have peers they've been missing. I'm extremely anxious about mitigation protocols and how that impacts the way I teach. It doesn't feel like I can adhere to mitigation 100% and at the same time, use best practices for teaching. It feels like I have to decide to focus on safety OR best practices teaching. I'm already struggling with mental exhaustion in ways I've never experienced. I'm worried about the other adults in our building - some are not feeling at all supported or safe in this transition. We are doing this for mental health of kids, but I don't believe the mental, physical and social well being of the adults is being considered at the level it should. Yes - some are ready to be back. Many are not. How do we support both?"

When given the prompt “The thing that I most need at this point is...”, time, the vaccine, the need for support from the community and board, safety, needing to feel heard and valued, Mondays, and consistency were big themes. Highlights of what our educators need most include:

- “support for my building administration. Our principal is working their butt off to support all staff and students in our building. When any questions/concerns are brought up at various district committees/meetings (ReOpening, Covid Task Force, School board meetings, etc.) they are immediately thrown back in our principal's face with a "what are you going to do about it" attitude. But then when we work as a building team to create a protocol and routines that we feel keep everyone safe and learning, there is AGAIN district level push back of "why isn't it being done this way, this is how we are doing it, etc.". It feels like a no-win situation in my building with a lack of true organization and leadership at the district level. If we are going to have district-wide protocol and answers to questions, that is great! We would love to follow whatever is sent our way. Or if we need to create our own building-specific protocol, that is great too! We have the leadership and intelligence to build great systems that work for us. But it cannot be a back and forth with people trying to find someone to blame. We are in this together and working through a pandemic-and the everchanging science/situations-one day at a time.”
- “for the District to come out and officially say "Hey. It's not entirely safe to go back full time, but we're going to do our best." I worry that some parents may point fingers and say "You're not keeping my child safe enough!" Under the upcoming model, if parents do choose to send their child to school, it should be agreed that they are assuming the risks. This would help to lessen the pressure I feel about trying to keep parents satisfied with my own virus mitigation efforts in the classroom.”
- “For the district to understand how limited and valuable planning time is. The quality of school is already so bad this year, less planning time to create an unsafe environment is a recipe for very low level education. Also, understand that high schoolers have different abilities to complete remote learning than elementary students. I TOTALLY understand that little kids need a safe place to be during the day. High schoolers do too, if they are unsafe at home they can always come in. However, for the vast majority who are safe at home, they can complete remote learning there to keep all of us safe.”
- “Assurance that our plan can change if numbers increase. If numbers increase in community and building we need to adapt and return to smaller numbers and class sizes.”
- “recognition that we are already doing a huge amount of work to make our students education awesome; and have been maintaining health and safety. To ask more of us as a dedicated staff, without acknowledging the compromise to our health/safety (without any sight on when the vaccines will be available) seems negligent on the part of the board and directors making those decisions.”
- “TIME and understanding. I need to have my Mondays to plan and prepare and get things squared away and ready for the upcoming week. I will not have the time nor the energy to do the things I need to do if I do not have Monday to prepare for all my classes. Having 2.5-hour classes was difficult, but we adjusted. Now moving to three classes is another change, and I absolutely need my Monday time to be ready to go and be able to teach with rigor and relevance. I need administration to understand we are trying our best and want to serve students at a high level, and I cannot do so without Monday to prepare. (I have been a certified educator for almost 30 years, teaching almost 20, so I am familiar with changes; these are too much.)”
- “to have the district acknowledge and promote the Herculean efforts of educators both in-person and at MOA; to get a vaccine and know my district admin is doing everything in their

power to get us moved ahead on the vaccination schedule; and I need to know the district will truly follow the Harvard study in the way it was intended or hold off on bringing all kids back. I need to know this as an MOA teacher because as of this semester, both of my own children are headed back, and I'm very nervous after learning things are not what we, as parents, were told they would be with regard to spacing."

- "A vaccination. Ability to teach only the amount of students who can safely be in a room together with proper distancing. Faith that my own teenagers are in safe classrooms and building. School board and administration that respect teachers."
- "1.) I would like our Superintendent and the Board of Trustees to defend what we do as teachers and to make us feel valued. 2.) To make us feel valued, I need both the Superintendent and the Trustees to come and visit our school, sit in our classrooms and see what we are doing. 3.) I need the school board to consider a different schedule for the Hybrid Plus model in which we increase the amount of class time through virtual synchronous classes. That way we can hold more synchronous classes while maintaining the alpha split and thus keeping student and teacher close contacts low."
- "To know that you have our best interests in mind and to be able to teach while staying safe. I don't think the voice of the high school educators was heard at all and with the current plan going forward I don't feel it is possible to maintain safety and keep case counts down. I also need time to do my job in these extenuating circumstances and be able to reach out to all of our struggling students or students who have missed literally a whole quarter due to covid. I currently have 2 students in here on this Monday who missed 2 weeks which is the whole quarter and are just trying to achieve a passing grade for this semester."
- "To hear that I am appreciated by those who are asking me to put my health at risk."
- "Time and a vaccine. Having a week of hybrid to start the semester and then transitioning to all students the second week of the semester is ridiculous and also takes some careful planning. I am looking forward to doing more in person and less online but I worry that I will be expected to make online curriculum for students who are not just quarantined but who miss school for any reason and I literally cannot keep up right now and I am working evenings and weekends. Plus, I would feel a lot safer if I were vaccinated. I do not know of another career right now where 23 people are placed in one room for 90 minutes at a time."
- "This year is very challenging and a whole new challenge. This is not a typical teaching year, and accordingly the work load for teachers is not your ordinary work load. I have never seen so many teachers this stressed and burnt out, and I am concerned about everyone's personal health and well being."
- "assurance that decisions about our schools will be made with input from staff...not just asked for, but actually considered and used to drive decisions. The current 6 week rotation was magically decided upon after we were asked what we felt was best. I am grateful for my job and i am grateful for my awesome students!"
- "to finish up and move on from MCPS. Sadly a very poorly run organization and now that we have coronavirus in front of us all of the neglected issues over the years have compounded the problems. Luckily I get to work with some fantastic students and if I am given time to figure things out I can do great things. I love teaching kids and do my best to tune out the administration as they have proven over the years to be unreliable and out of touch."
- "Plans should not be left up to buildings. I know that principals are asking teachers to just "figure it out." That's unfair, puts too much pressure on the already overworked backs of teachers, and won't create a successful pathway for re-entering schools full time."

- “The recognition that special education teachers are being placed at a much higher degree of risk than regular education teachers. Due to the nature of my job, I come into contact with 70+ students per day. I frequently wipe bottoms, noses, mouths, and I am spit at. I need to feel that administration cares about me and my family's health. I need them to be advocating for us to receive the vaccine. If I had known this is how the school year would have played out, I would have fought like heck to teach in the MOA. I regret that decision every single day. I wish there were more options for those of us who don't feel safe teaching at brick and mortar buildings.”
- “Support, grace, and positive comments from families and staff.”
- “Mondays! These are like a gift from the very gods of education! My lessons are so much more thoughtful, responsive, engaging, deliberate because I have TIME to think, explore, create, plan!”
- “Time to implement and fine-tune protocols surrounding double the students. I also need the school board to see me as a valuable human being and not just "worth the risk" because kids need a grade.”
- “A plan for student lunches that meets recommendations for reopening to all students.”
- “1. Mercer to acknowledge how insensitive his comment at the last school board meeting was and apologize. What will he say if MCPS were to have a staff member pass away from Covid? 2. The school board to act on the fact that schools will continue to need Mondays off through the end of the school year for meetings, collaborating/planning with our teams, planning for our classroom, preparing work for students in quarantine and conferencing with/instructing them on the work they have missed.”
- “A schedule. With all of the changes, I have to keep moving kids and it just doesn't work (especially when I am supposed to have consistency with groups and clusters of kids). I am missing student times and having to make them up because specials change or the kid transitions from school to MOA etc. I would do anything just to see in person students or MOA, not both.”
- “teachers to feel safe so students feel safe; students need to be in school however we need to do so safely”
- “A vaccine and for everyone to understand that teachers are AT capacity. I have literally nothing else I can give right now. I have no work/life boundaries and my family is feeling the affect of my work worries and stress. If I raise concerns I feel like I am being difficult and that I am alone in feeling worried about returning back to school.”
- “I really would like clarity and consistency. If we are going to move to different phases, I would like clear indicators of when and why that would happen. A bit of consistency would also help. Let us move into Phase 2 and please don't change anything for a while unless absolutely necessary. This whole school year has been tumultuous every two weeks with constant change of rotations, each rotation had different days therefore re-working plans every single time. I just would like some consistency for a bit. I also think it is extremely important to keep remote Mondays. If we go back to 5 days a week and start packing our afternoons with meetings, I foresee myself planning/grading/emailing all weekend. Planning for blocks of 2.5 hours for 4-5 days a week is a lot different than planning for a regular school week. In order for that time to be successful it needs to be carefully planned. Having Monday for meetings and PLC time has been extremely helpful and necessary!”
- “Mondays to do what I would have to be doing well into the evening this year. That is the only thing we are getting right now that makes me feel like our time and mental wellbeing matter. I have figured out how to provide meaningful work for my students online and want to do it for one day of remote learning.”

IB Program retention

Walsh, Amanda <amanda1.walsh@umconnect.umt.edu>
To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Fri, Mar 5, 2021 at 3:25 PM

Hello,

Good afternoon and thank you for your time. I am writing to urge the board of trustees to please retain the IB programs at all schools where they are currently offered in Missoula.

I feel that these programs are highly beneficial to the students. IB programs help students understand connections between themselves and the world around them. The teaching methods foster understanding between individuals from different cultures, countries, and the environment we all share.

As our world becomes more technologically advanced, people are increasingly likely to need the ability to communicate with various cultures and nations. Global community fosters understanding and participation in mutually beneficial relationships. The more students learn about similarities between themselves and others, the more they are equipped to become fully functioning members of a global community and economy.

Now is the best time to ensure that Montana students learn necessary skills to help give Montana an edge in a rapidly changing economic environment. As our state sees a massive increase in the number of residents, and struggles to meet the demand for good quality jobs that pay a living wage, we must diversify our training to students. Our students are the future of industry and jobs. Would it not be wonderful if they had better opportunities for employment, other than fast food or extractive resource industries?

In conclusion, I support the IB programs because they are the best way to influence our youth to fully engage with the world around them, and create bonds with a wide variety of people. Our world needs innovative thinkers who network well and help everyone, not just themselves.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Amanda Walsh
