

## Community Input – September 23, 2020 Board Meeting

| Name           | Address          | Question/Comment  |
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| Rachel Pollard | Address Provided | <p>I am writing to express my extensive concerns regarding the district’s apparent plan to return to in school instruction/hybrid model for students this fall/winter. As a member of the Arlington Heights community, I am concerned about the continued re-opening of our community, and this certainly includes our schools. COVID cases continue to rise in this country and yet we continue to re-open non-essential establishments. Unfortunately this community has chosen to prioritize going out to dinner over their children and teachers safely returning to school.</p> <p>To begin, I fully acknowledge that this is an impossible situation. I completely understand there is not a way to address the concerns of every teacher, administrator, community member, and student. There is, however, a way to prioritize the health and safety of the aforementioned individuals. At this moment, I do not believe sending students and teachers back to in-person learning of any kind would be keeping their health and safety as a first priority.</p> <p>I am extremely pleased with the way remote learning has been handled this year. My daughter, who is a 6th grader at South, seems very engaged and loves her classes. She enjoys being placed in breakout rooms so she can work in a small group setting and build relationships with her classmates. She is still able to get the “middle school experience” because she is changing classes and meeting new friends. One of my concerns is that once some students return to in person instruction, those who choose to stay remote will be limited in the number of students they meet with each day. This will limit the important social interactions that our children are craving.</p> <p>As shown by sixth grade orientation, having students in person is not a safe or sustainable way to provide instruction. I sent my daughter to orientation in person, despite my concerns, only to find out later that a student who attended was diagnosed with COVID. I have full confidence that the South Administration and Staff did everything they could to keep all children safe, but this shows how COVID is not something that we can control. If this had happened during in person instruction, an entire grade level and their teachers would have been quarantined, leaving parents struggling to find last minute childcare, teachers scrambling for lessons, and students without consistent instruction. Even if my child is remote, this situation will put her teachers health at risk, which would create a disruption in her learning.</p> <p>Finally I am concerned about the time of year that we are choosing to bring students back to school. As the weather gets colder, and our patience with this pandemic thins, it is very likely that teachers and students’ families will begin to spend time indoors with people outside of their household. The holidays are coming up, which will only encourage this behavior more.</p> <p>When school closures first occurred in March, I, like many others, believed that we would be out of school for two weeks or maybe a month at most. It was beyond the realm of possibility that I would be writing a letter to our Board of Education six months later, urging you not to send students back to school. As a parent, I understand the impact of not holding in-person classes. I understand that my child cannot learn at the same rate, or at the same level, as when they are in the classroom. But I also understand that a classroom of students, spaced out “to the best of our ability”, is not going to provide for a productive learning environment.</p> <p>I understand that I can opt to keep my child home, but this goes beyond that choice. She will be isolated from other students who are in-person, she will miss out on connections from the teachers who are focused more on students in front of them, and her</p> |

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|      |         | <p>teachers will be put at additional risk of becoming sick. Additionally, as a community member, I am invested in keeping the community safe. I would obviously love to have my child go back to school, I would love to be able to go back to my office as well, but unfortunately no matter how much we wish those things could be safe, they are not. We're moving forward with a survival of the fittest attitude and we should all question why we're willing to put our children on the front lines of a deadly pandemic.</p> <p>If the worst should happen, and we are asked if we did everything "to the best of our ability" to mitigate a tragic situation, I do not feel we can answer that question with an honest "yes." We can prioritize health and safety, while continuing a robust, remote model for this school year. That is "to the best of our ability." Thank you for your consideration and time.</p> |