

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS SCHOOL DISTRICT 25  
1200 S. Dunton Ave.  
Arlington Heights, Illinois 60005

School Board Meeting Minutes  
February 24, 2022

Brian Cerniglia, Vice President of the Arlington Heights School District 25 Board of Education, called the meeting to order on February 24, 2022 to accept a motion to adjourn into closed session at 5:15 p.m. The meeting was held at the Dunton Administration Building, 1200 S. Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights, Illinois.

The meeting was noticed for closed session to discuss: The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors, or specific volunteers of the District or legal counsel for the District, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor, or a volunteer of the District or against legal counsel for the District to determine its validity, 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(1); Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21); Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular District has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the District finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the closed meeting minutes, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11); Collective negotiating matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2).



Regular Meeting

Brian Cerniglia, Vice President of the Arlington Heights School District 25 Board of Education, called the meeting to order 7:07 p.m. on February 24, 2022. The meeting was held at the Dunton Administration Building, 1200 S. Dunton Avenue, Arlington Heights, Illinois. Roll call was noted and the Pledge of Allegiance said.

Board members present: Brian Cerniglia, Chad Conley, Rich Olejniczak, Anisha Ismail Patel, and Greg Scapillato.

Board members excused: Scott Filipek and Gina Faso

Others Present: Dr. Lori Bein, Superintendent; Dr. Brian Kaye, Assistant Superintendent for Personnel and Planning; Dr. Becky FitzPatrick, Assistant Superintendent for the Department of Student Services; Dr. Peg Lasiewicki, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; Chris Fahnoe, Director of Technology; Adam

Harris, Head of Communications and Storytelling; Brad Katz, Information Technology Specialist; Lana O'Brien, Recording Secretary; staff; and community.

### Recognitions and Presentations

Mr. Cerniglia, on behalf of the Board, and Dr. Bein extended congratulations to the district Spelling Bee participants. Dr. Becky FitzPatrick, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning, introduced the students. Dr. Bein noted that the students were all very supportive of each other and are to be commended.

#### South Middle School

Tyler Clark  
Rosemary Heckard  
Auren Whiting

#### Thomas Middle School

Vishnu Adiga  
Grace Chen  
Haritha Jadadeesan Suganya

Grace Chen will represent District 25 in the Scripps Regional Spelling Bee on March 9, 2022.

### Community Input

- Leah Ross addressed the Board regarding thanking the Board for being mask optional.
- Karen Wolff addressed the Board regarding thanking the Board for being mask optional; and the mandates.
- Joshua Alvarado addressed the Board regarding not wanting critical race theory, social emotional learning, and other topics taught in the schools.
- Stacey Esposito addressed the Board regarding thanking the Board for being mask optional; and the amount of time for lunch at school.
- Kristin Keil addressed the Board regarding thanking the Board for choice.
- Audrey Corcoran and Gretchen Heckard thanked the Board and Dr. Bein for being mask optional; and distancing in school and attending sporting events.
- Heidi Steinike addressed the Board regarding wearing masks.
- Kerri Hood and her two children addressed the Board regarding thanking the Board for letting them have choice.
- Maryann Zaleski and her daughter, Amelia, addressed the Board regarding not wearing masks and the mandates.
- Samantha Polihronis addressed the Board regarding thanking the Board for having a choice on wearing a mask.

Several comments were received electronically. All comments are given to the Board in full and posted on the website.

### Consent Agenda

**Motion:** A. Patel moved and G. Scapillato seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve those items on the Consent Agenda as follows (A) Personnel Report and Addendum to Personnel Report; (B) Treasurer's Report (C) Invoices; (D) Fixed Asset Disposal Report; (E) Regular and Closed Session Meeting minutes of January 20,

2022; (F) Special Committee of the Whole Kindergarten Meeting and Closed Session Meeting minutes of February 3, 2022; (G) Hold Closed session minutes of July 15, 2021 through December 31, 2021 per Board Policy 2:220-E1; (H) Hold Audiotapes January 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020 per Board Policy 2:220-E1

Roll Call: B. Cerniglia, yes; C. Conley, yes; R. Olejniczak, yes; A. Patel, yes; G. Scapillato, yes. Motion carried 5/0.

Dr. Kaye introduced Ms. Anetta Peebles, who will be a new Student Services Coordinator starting with the 2022-2023 school year.

#### Communications:

The following reports were given:

- IASB – Ms. Patel reported that IASB offers several opportunities for professional development, and described a few of the offerings.
- ED-RED – Mr. Olejniczak reported that a meeting was held on February 11, and the main topic was regarding the TRO. He also talked about other legislative action related to schools.
- Other Board Communication – Mr. Olejniczak noted that some Board members visited Thomas Middle School and Westgate Elementary School. Ms. Patel noted that she also visited South Middle School. She also stated that this past week District 214 had a discussion regarding DEI. She talked about District 25's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Mr. Scapillato thanked Ms. Patel for her comments.

The following reports were received:

- PTA –Ms. Barbieri reported that Windsor PTA applied and received a \$500 grant to enhance their DEI practice at school. She explained that the scholarship applications for graduating high school seniors are due February 27, and nine students will receive scholarships. Also, K-8 students can enter the scholarship contest, "Spark the Park". Ten winners will be chosen and will receive an Arlington Heights Park District gift card. Applications are due on March 1, and winners will be notified by March 11.
- ATA – Ms. Berg stated that teachers have been good examples for the students regarding masks, and that everyone has been supportive of each other. She highlighted the many happenings at Greenbrier Elementary School, and added that Greenbrier parents had a parade for their teachers, which was a great show of support.

There were no reports from the following

- NSSEO
- Board Governance
- ABC25

Ms. Faso entered the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

Student Learning  
Assessment Update

Dr. FitzPatrick and Ms. Amanda Czerniuk, Assessment Coordinator, updated the Board on two assessments; Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) for Kindergarten students, and NEWA MAP for Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Dr. FitzPatrick explained the KIDS assessment, and Ms. Czerniuk reviewed the KIDS District 25 and state overall performance from 2019-20 and 2020-21. Over 85% of District 25 Kindergarten students demonstrated readiness on the KIDS assessment during the 2020-21 school year. She noted that the window for data collection was extended from the typical first 60 days of school to over the course of seven months. With the return to the 60-day window next year, it is expected that results will return to more typical readiness levels.

National NWEA educational research background was provided. District 25 is administering the MAP test in the fall, winter and spring this year. For both reading and math, MAP District 25 projected RIT vs. actual RIT growth data for winter 2022, MAP District 25 average RIT scores for winter 2020 vs. winter 2022, MAP Skip-year, and MAP Subgroup performance was shown and discussed in detail.

The results indicate that District 25 K-8 students are growing but not yet to pre-pandemic projections, which is consistent with NWEA research on other school districts across the country. District 25 is trending above national averages on the MAP Assessment by showing less of a decline in percentile points from pre-pandemic testing to current testing. They explained how the district is advancing student achievement and growth. This fall and winter K-8 grade teachers participated in NWEA professional development. Also, an after-school tutoring program for math and literacy began this fall, and will occur again this spring.

Board members asked questions and there was discussion on what to expect with these scores in the fall; subgroup information and the impact on our district; specifics on the data; the summer school enrichment program; fall professional learning; and additional information on tutoring.

It was noted that MAP testing is not standardized testing, but we use MAP data points to provide responsive instruction. We can drill down within specific areas of content, and we need more usable information back on a regular basis. The district also offers math and reading intervention during the school day. Ms. Czerniuk and Dr. FitzPatrick were thanked for the information.

Student Services – No Report

Business and Finance – No Report

## Facilities Management – No Report

### Personnel and Planning

#### Enrollment Update

Dr. Kaye presented demographic trends and enrollment projections that were completed in January 2022 by Dr. John Kasarda, Consulting Demographer. He described the scope of work that was completed, as well as the demographic history.

There are three series enrollment projections based on different assumptions, and forecast by grade and year. An overview of District 25 was given, as well as housing and population trends, and student migration. We had the largest enrollment decline since 2000 from 2019 to 2020, which is likely due to the pandemic.

School districts are open demographic systems whose growth, stability or decline is affected by two factors: the difference between the size of the kindergarten class that enters in August and the size of the previous graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade class; and net migration/transfer of school-age children in the district as the progress through the grades over the years. Individual data for each school was shown and discussed, and included enrollment history, enrollment change, and the net annual student migration/transfer from one grade to the next.

Mr. Conley left the meeting at 8:42 p.m. and returned at 8:47 p.m.

Dr. Kaye detailed the enrollment future of District 25, and noted that the two sets of interrelated factors are the changing racial and ethnic composition of District residents; and the net student in-migration resulting from new housing and turnover development, which will likely have a minimal impact.

He provided enrollment projections by year and grade for the district as a whole, and the middle schools through 2031-32; and elementary schools by year and grade through 2026-27, which assumes the continuation of the half day kindergarten program. He also explained the assumptions for Series A, B, and C, and provided those projections for each school, and the whole district. He focused the comments on Series B, which is the most likely scenario. The racial/ethnic composition was shown for each school and the district as a whole. He explained the factors underlying the projections; the professional judgement of Dr. Kasarda; and the overall impressions over the next five years for each school. The conclusion is that there will be a modest 233 student decrease over the next five years, after which slight increments will occur; and that half of the total district enrollment decline is projected to be at Ivy Hill. Two separate projects are currently being conducted. We anticipate the future kindergarten enrollment will most likely mirror the first-grade enrollment should we move to full day kindergarten. We will continue to use Series B when projecting enrollment.

Board members asked questions and there was discussion on the projections and specific schools, as well as full day kindergarten. This information will be helpful for the full day kindergarten discussion.

Dr. Bein noted that Series B has been very close to the actual enrollment over the past several years. She also noted that we do not know if several Ivy Hill families that left the country during the pandemic and were not able to return, will return now. Dr. Kaye was thanked for the data and the insights that were shared.

### Superintendent Report

#### Freedom of Information Act Report

- Daniel Hernandez requested information on construction projects; a response was provided on January 20, 2022.
- Nathan Mihelich of the Illinois Retired Teachers Association requested information on retirees; a response was provided on January 20, 2022.
- Ryan Brooks of the Freedom Foundation, requested information on SEIU employees; a response was provided on January 20, 2022.
- Zoe Yacin of SmartProcure requested information on purchasing records; a response was provided on January 31, 2022.
- Nick Foley requested information on a surety bond; a response was provided on January 31, 2022.
- Ewa Wojcik requested information on communication for a vaccination clinic; a response was provided on January 31, 2022.
- David Tully requested information related to the closure and sale of Ridge School; a response was provided on January 31, 2022.
- Marzena Mikulski requested information on disinfecting products and HVAC upgrades; a response was provided on February 1, 2022.
- Karen Wolff requested information on communication and ESSER II and III funding; a response was provided on February 3, 2022.
- Christy Witherow requested information on a purchase and invoices from a school district law firm; a response was provided on February 8, 2022.
- Ewa Wojcik requested information on a vaccination clinic and SSCIP information; a response was provided on February 11, 2022.
- Ewa Wojcik requested information on communication for a vaccination clinic and the school selection; a response was provided on February 22, 2022.
- Polianthi Bakir requested information on emails from SSCIP (insurance pool); a response was provided on February 22, 2022.
- Jenny Olickal requested information on SSCIP information; a response was provided on February 22, 2022.

Dr. Bein noted that there is a significant increase in FOIA requests. She thanked Ms. Mallek, who does the work to respond to them. We respect the community to be able to make these requests. The Board was provided a chart that shows the hours spent, and costs of the FOIA requests. Ms. Mallek spends her own time reviewing records before they go to the attorneys, which saves the district money on attorney fees. Dr. Bein may have Ms. Mallek use the attorney for these going forward, and not use her own time. Some FOIA requests may be especially burdensome, and we have experienced a few of them this year. We will continue to update the Board on these costs going forward. A Board member noted that the district has spent a large amount over the past two

weeks as well as 40 hours of staff time that could have been used tending to student services.

#### Pandemic Procedures Update

Dr. Bein presented an update to the Board on pandemic procedures. She showed the District 25 dashboard data from February 21, and noted that the exclusion number is much smaller. The trend line on the positive case chart is declining through February 19, and currently there is a .2% positivity rate in the district.

She reviewed the mitigation strategies that are continuing, and noted that we will be discontinuing contact tracing, exclusion of close contacts, and the requirement of test to return. We tried to continue contact tracing, but it is very difficult to do and unreliable. Next steps are to monitor the District 25 dashboard and area COVID-19 data; update procedures by March 7 for lunch, assemblies, field trips, and extracurricular activities; and continue to provide updates to the community.

Board members asked questions and there was discussion on medically fragile students; how teachers are working with students to address respecting everyone's decisions; new lunch procedures; assemblies and indoor air quality; CCDPH guidelines; communications; and extracurricular activities.

#### Strategic Plan Update

Due to the time, this topic is being postponed to the March 17 Board meeting.

#### Public Act 102-0543; Reporting Student Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Due to the time, this topic is being postponed to the March 17 Board meeting.

#### Board Meeting Structure

Due to the time, this topic is being postponed to the March 17 Board meeting.

#### Second Reading of Policies, Press 108

The Board agreed to the changes on all of the policies, except for 3:40 Superintendent, and 4:175 Convicted Child Sex Offender; Screening; Notifications, which are being pulled. These will be brought back at the March 17 meeting for a second reading.

#### Press 108:

2:20 Powers and Duties of the Board of Education; Indemnification

2:105 Ethics and Gift Ban

2:110 Qualifications, Term, and Duties of Board Officers

2:120 Board Member Development

2:220 Board of Education Meeting Procedure

2:220-E1 Exhibit – Board Treatment of Closed Meeting Verbatim Recordings and Minutes

2:220-E3 Exhibit – Closed Meeting Minutes

2:220-E5 Exhibit – Semi-Annual Review of Closed Meeting Minutes

2:220-E6 Exhibit – Log of Closed Meeting Minutes

- 3:50 Administrative Personnel Other Than the Superintendent
- 3:60 Administrative Responsibility of the Building Principal
- 4:170 Safety
- 5:10 Equal Employment Opportunity and Recruitment of Underrepresented Individuals
- 5:20 Workplace Harassment Prohibited
- 5:30 Hiring Process and Criteria
- 5:50 Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace; E-Cigarette, Tobacco, and Cannabis Prohibition
- 5:90 Abused and Neglected Child Reporting
- 5:100 Staff Development Program
- 5:120 Employee Ethics; Conduct and Conflict of Interest
- 5:125 Personal Technology and Social Media; Usage and Conduct
- 5:150 Personnel Records
- 5:185 Family and Medical Leave
- 5:200 Terms and Conditions of Employment and Dismissal
- 5:220 Substitute Teachers
- 5:250 Leaves of Absence
- 5:330 Sick Days, Vacation, Holidays, and Leaves
- 6:15 School Accountability
- 6:20 School Year Calendar and Day
- 6:50 Wellness
- 6:120 Education of Children with Disabilities
- 6:135 Accelerated Placement Program
- 6:340 Student Testing and Assessment Program
- 7:10 Equal Educational Opportunities
- 7:20 Harassment of Students Prohibited
- 7:30 Student Assignment and Intra-District Transfer
- 7:60 Residence
- 7:70 Attendance and Truancy
- 7:80 Release Time for Religious Instruction/Observance
- 7:150 Agency and Policy Interviews
- 7:180 Prevention of and Response to Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment
- 7:190 Student Behavior
- 7:200 Out-of-School Suspension Procedures
- 7:210 Expulsion Procedures
- 7:250 Student Support Services
- 7:260 Exemption from Physical Education
- 7:290 Suicide and Depression Awareness and Prevention
- 7:340 Student Records
- 7:345 Use of Educational Technologies; Student Data Privacy and Security



**Motion:** G. Scapillato moved and C. Conley seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the policies and exhibits as presented by the Illinois Association of School Boards, with the exception of Policies 3:40 and 4:175.

Roll Call: B. Cerniglia, yes; C. Conley, yes; G. Faso, yes; R. Olejniczak, yes; A. Patel, yes; G. Scapillato, yes. Motion carried 6/0.

#### Second Reading of Policies – Five Year Review, Press 108

Press 108:

4:120 Food Services

8:100 Relations with Other Organizations and Agencies

**Motion:** G. Scapillato moved and R. Olejniczak seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve the policies as presented by the Illinois Association of School Boards for a five-year review.

Roll Call: B. Cerniglia, yes; C. Conley, yes; G. Faso, yes; R. Olejniczak, yes; A. Patel, yes; G. Scapillato, yes. Motion carried 6/0.

#### First Reading of Policies

Press 108:

4:60 Purchases and Contracts

4:160 Environmental Quality of Buildings and Grounds

6:60 Curriculum Content

7:310 Restrictions on Publications; Elementary Schools

#### Community Input - None

#### Future Agenda Items

##### Topics with Dates to be Determined

Remote Academy Update – Dr. Bein noted that this will be added to a future meeting.

##### New Topics

A Board member would like to discuss having a Board Policy Committee.

A Board member would like to discuss the Equity Audit as a report.

A Board member would like to discuss setting a time limit for Board meetings, and possibly adding it to the Board meeting structure agenda item.

**Motion:** G. Scapillato moved and R. Olejniczak seconded that the Board of Education adjourn the regular meeting.

Roll Call: B. Cerniglia, yes; C. Conley, yes; G. Faso, yes; R. Olejniczak, yes; A. Patel, yes; G. Scapillato, yes. Motion carried 6/0.

The Board adjourned the regular meeting at 9:55 p.m.

Submitted,

Lana M. O'Brien  
Recording Secretary

Approved: March 17, 2022

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President  
Board of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary  
Board of Education

Date minutes available for public inspection: March 18, 2022

Date minutes posted on District website: March 18, 2022

Community Input Received Electronically

First and Last Name	Public Comments from the February 24, 2022 AHSD25 Board Meeting
Kate Limbers	Is keeping kindergarten half day one of the options? I didn't see that listed as an available option. Thanks,
Kristina Heaton	I was not able to attend the last board mtg. where full day kindergarten was discussed, and where the proposed facilities were discussed but I reviewed all the docs and associated costs/possible referendums. Has the district considered using the Dunton Admin. Building or the unused parts of Miner School as an early childhood education building? Or even ending the lease of the Chicago Futabakai Japanese School at the former Rand Jr. High School and using that to accomodate the space constraints the district faces? Would making building upgrades to any of these facilities to make a building compliant with building code be more cost effective than additions or new construction? Moving the admin building to a traditional office space seems like it would be cheaper than building a new education facility. It seems that the board of education and district administrators have historically been and are being rather short sighted. Renovations of the elementary schools just finished a couple years ago and it is crazy to think that additions need to be made again. Our community also continues to grow, with new homes, row homes, townhomes, apartment complexes etc. continuing to be built. The district needs to look to these future needs so that this doesn't become an expense that the tax payers need to shoulder the burden of every 5 years.
Praina Arora	Hi, I would like to know more on changes made for 5th graders , as in how are you going to tackle this new change if its made to move them to middle schools .How are you going to transit the elementary school children directly to middle school .Have you thought how are they going to feel or how is socially emotionally going to affect them.Have you surveyed Parents to check how they feel.This is not only about the budget that you have stated in the meetings, but is also chaotic kids and their parents.
Malgorzata Patryarcha	<p>Dear Superintendent and Board,</p> <p>I am very happy that after so many months we are finally mask-free. Masks took a big toll on my family and I appreciate D25 changing the mask policy quickly and not appealing the court's decision. I am hopeful we will see a long-awaited shift in how our Board approaches making difficult decisions. During the last few months, I've seen a lack of transparency on your part, the confusion it caused among parents, no proper questions being asked, no action taken to challenge ISBE. I've seen taking away children's freedom for state funding, taking parents' rights away and deciding for us against our will, using our taxpayers' money to pay for questionable legal advice. Now is the time to clean up this mess, formulate lessons learned and act upon them:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Treat parents as partners.</li> <li>2) Communicate clearly and effectively with the parents. The Board needs to be transparent with our money and delineate where that money was spent. It is public information we are entitled to see and understand.</li> <li>3) Use taxpayers' money wisely - Let the parents decide what's right for their kids and seek solid legal advice.</li> <li>4) School districts' policies must align with the Constitution, Illinois school code, and other pertinent statutes. The school board cannot do whatever they want. We, the parents, are your checks and balances if you do not represent truth, transparency, honesty, and disclosure</li> </ol>
Wojciech Tarchala	In her court order, Judge Grishow has stated, "The Court understands the tragic toll COVID-19 has taken, not only in the state but throughout the nation and globe. Nonetheless, it is the duty of the Courts to preserve the rule of law and ensure all branches of government act within the bounds of the authority granted under the Constitution." She also stated that it does not "allow our government to act unlawfully even in the pursuit of desirable ends." It is about time D25 stops operating outside of the law as well. For many months, you were committing an illegal act. I don't know if there's anything worse than this that a Board of Education can be accused

First and Last Name	Public Comments from the February 24, 2022 AHSD25 Board Meeting
	<p>of. You should have been worried about overstepping your boundaries instead of waiting to see if you will be sued or not. Going forward, when making decisions that have a tremendous impact on the community, you need to ask questions just like parents are asking in order to make EDUCATED decisions. I know it's not always easy, but if you cannot handle the responsibility that comes with your position, then in my opinion you're not a good fit. Our Board needs leaders. I expect you to make better decisions in the future. Stand up for the freedom of our children and also stand up for your freedom. It is not just the freedom of our children, it is your freedom too.</p>
<p>Diana Giacalone</p>	<p>Dear School Board Members,</p> <p>I would like to express my concern for the potential full day kindergarten program that is being considered right now in District 25. All of the options for expansion currently being considered are all very disruptive to the students and very expensive for the taxpayers. One of the advantages of neighborhood schools is that siblings and neighbors are in the same place. Moving the youngest or the oldest students from the elementary buildings would be very unfortunate and cost a lot of money on additional bussing.</p> <p>More importantly, I am concerned about the motivation behind these considerations. The students of District 25 are doing very well academically and are quite prepared for first grade with the current half day program. Children who are five need a lot of unstructured play time which can be provided in an all day kindergarten program but why should we pay teachers to supervise play time? Unstructured play is critical to the cognitive, physical, and social emotional development in young children, I don't think this is up for debate. What is up for discussion is the need for a full day kindergarten program. Many surrounding districts do have a full day program however something that attracted me to this school district is the half day kindergarten program. Our youngest learners should be spending the other half of their school day at the playground, on playdates, shopping with an adult, at the public library, visiting with grandparents, helping in the kitchen, bouncing a ball, playing with siblings... the list goes on. I enjoy providing my children with these experiences and other parents do too.</p> <p>Families have the choice of where to live and as is, our schools are bursting at the seams. The half day program has not deterred people from moving into this district. If there are some families who need the full day program for child care purposes then let's provide a childcare program for those families in need, not spend millions of dollars to alter a program that is not broken and not necessary. Some families, like mine, appreciate this extra time with their little ones. How many times have we all uttered the words, "they grow up too fast?" Let's not make it even faster by getting them into a full day program even younger.</p> <p>Thank you for taking careful consideration of all opinions before making a decision on this topic. Sincerely, Diana Giacalone</p>
<p>Tracy Falconer</p>	<p>The TRO hearings exposed a lot of things parents didn't know about and at the same time caused even greater confusion about what we were told in regards to local control. I see two choices for the D25 board at this point:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If you were part of the conspiracy and you lied to us, you need to resign immediately.</li> <li>2. If you think you have been deceived with bad legal advice, it is your duty as public servants to hold the lawyers who gave our district such advice accountable and expose their agenda and potential conflicts of interests.</li> </ol>
<p>Agnes Tarchala</p>	<p>Dr. Bein and Board Members,</p> <p>As a taxpayer, I am appalled at the way covid mitigations have been handled by D25. As a district, you have had the authority all along to be a beacon to our community. You chose not to. Judge Grishow used the word "evil" in her ruling. A Loudoun County Circuit Judge has also</p>

First and Last Name	Public Comments from the February 24, 2022 AHSD25 Board Meeting
	<p>ruled in favor of parents, enjoining the school board's mandatory mask policy citing "irreparable harm" to students. You are adults and you should have known the dangerous game that you are playing when you were forcefully masking children. As public servants, you have gotten out of control and you owe parents an explanation. Did you really need a court order to assert your local control? Did you really not know you were committing a crime? You should be the protector of parents' rights from the state government overreach, but instead you followed the money. In regards to masks, the law is crystal clear. On July 9th 2021, the CDC released new guidance for the 2021-2022 school year and then was fully adopted by ISBE and IDPH. For those that do not know, ISBE and IDPH are not legislative law-making bodies, they are merely administrative bodies that can provide guidance, not laws. With HB2789 not passing last summer, IDPH has no powers within our schools, so please stop referring to them as a guru. Also, ISBE does not have the authority to place schools on probation, withhold funding and accreditation. I pay through my taxpayer's money for you to do the job and recognize what is law and what is not.</p>
Debi Shiffman	<p>I'd like to thank our Superintendent and the Board for giving all families the option to make health choices for their children (even though it came as a response to court's ruling). It was long overdue. Everyone single one of us who do not want to be masked is entitled to a due process hearing by the IDPH. And they are not going to hear 100 let alone 6 million cases because there is no science to prove that masks work. Now is the time for schools to forget about the mandates and stick to do what they're paid to do.....teach!!!!</p>
Marzena Enger Mikulski	<p>Dr. Bein and D25 Board, For the last few months, the message you were sending was our hands are tied, we have no local control. Then, the TRO lawsuit brought a big chance for changing this situation. Parents wanted to peacefully and lawfully end the political games used against us, our money, the education system and our children. You were given an option not to be part of that lawsuit, but you didn't take it. Parents had on their side the truth, science, ethics, and law. I'd like to know who from District 25 decided to go against parents in court and why? Please provide your analysis on the TRO, along with the names of the lawyers and law firms giving you legal advice, and present them for public dialogue at the next board meeting. This would help foster trust, integrity, and transparency that has been lost and broken. Thank you!</p>
Edyta Panocha	<p>Since D25 has been utilizing SHIELD testing, please consider the following article that talks about false positives.</p> <p>As much as 40% of positive SHIELD tests in District 203 may be false due to the absence of positive retesting: <a href="https://www.centraltimes.org/uncategorized/2022/02/07/as-much-as-forty-percent-of-positive-shield-tests-in-district-203-may-be-false-due-to-absence-of-positive-retesting/">https://www.centraltimes.org/uncategorized/2022/02/07/as-much-as-forty-percent-of-positive-shield-tests-in-district-203-may-be-false-due-to-absence-of-positive-retesting/</a></p>
Nichole Wolverton	<p>This past weekend Thomas and South Middle Schools hosted the Sweetheart Volleyball tournament. I was unable to walk into the game with admission paying students. The students were asked to leave after they received their money back. The tournament schedule that was sent out to some parents indicated there was a student charge of \$2 per student. This would lead you to believe that students were welcome. We need to move forward, with caution (mask optional) and allow these students to experience all there is to experience during these influential years. Showing support for school programs and fellow students is a healthy and safe way to spend their time. For those who fear of COVID exposure, they can choose NOT to attend. It is unfair to continue to hold back those students who WANT to be part of something. These rules are ridiculous. The high school district these students feed into are holding events with students and there is no rise in COVID cases. Look at their last weeks COVID numbers report as I am sure they will share them with you and you will be pleasantly surprised how low the numbers are if any. Buffalo Grove High School reported ZERO cases. Lets move on past these unreasonable fears you have and start moving forward in a positive direction for those who want to. FREEDOM TO CHOOSE to ENJOY SCHOOL</p>

First and Last Name	Public Comments from the February 24, 2022 AHSD25 Board Meeting
Dariusz Gatko	<p>When you will return with 30 minutes Lunches? our kids still eat like a Turkeys. It was fast and easy to adopt 20 minute lunches, lets do the same back.</p> <p>We were following directions now is Your turn to follow the Law.</p> <p>Other topic is why we pushing gender agenda on our kids? Let's them be kids and lets Start teaching our kids mathematic and English, not segregate them by gender. Choosing gender should be parents/guardian with kids not a School agenda.</p>
Anna Bratko	<p>In this Chicago Tribune article dated 2/2/22 - <a href="https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-covid-schools-demand-exit-plans-local-control-20220203-siwtg2ocyvcb7dcabu4wvtr43e-story.html?utm_source=newsletter&amp;utm_medium=email&amp;utm_campaign=Daywatch&amp;utm_content=911643895974#nws=true">https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-covid-schools-demand-exit-plans-local-control-20220203-siwtg2ocyvcb7dcabu4wvtr43e-story.html?utm_source=newsletter&amp;utm_medium=email&amp;utm_campaign=Daywatch&amp;utm_content=911643895974#nws=true</a></p> <p>I read about three different school districts that tried to advocate for their districts using common sense:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) "In a Tuesday tweet directed to IDPH, the Illinois State board of Education and Pritzker, Kaine Osburn, the superintendent at Wilmette-based Avoca School District 37 said, 'Numbers are declining. You don't need to answer now, but in the coming weeks please develop a plan &amp; metrics for the option to off-ramp masks in schools. It's leadership only your team can provide &amp; things will get messy without it.'"</li> <li>2) "Officials at Winnetka Public Schools District 36 are also seeking guidance from the state with hopes of transitioning out of required virus protocol with the goal of being 'ready once conditions improve. 'I am writing to advocate for school and health officials working together to design an exit strategy for COVID-19 mitigations and a measured return to normalcy,' District 36 Superintendent Trisha Kocanda said in a letter to Pritzker and IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike."</li> <li>3) "In Barrington 220 School District, which is among the districts facing litigation, the board of education voted Monday to approve 'benchmarks' that officials said will inform future mitigation decisions."</li> </ol> <p>There are other examples from last year. I would like to understand why our superintendent and board didn't do anything close to this. Why did you think it was not worth pursuing? Please explain.</p>
Marta Denisiuk	<p>I am surprised how many teachers in our schools continue to wear a mask even though they don't run a risk of losing their jobs anymore. I know for a fact that a lot of teachers are still terrified of covid. That would explain the reason they kept pressuring and intimidating their students, not recognizing that the cloth masks that most children in our schools have worn were totally useless, which CDC itself admitted. I am also very disappointed that none of my child's teachers have acknowledged the devastating effects of masking. I wish they were like this Canadian teacher who was not afraid to speak up: "My students were taught to think of themselves as vectors of disease. This has fundamentally altered their understanding of themselves...When we look at the Covid-19 pandemic through the lens of history, I believe it will be clear that we betrayed our children."</p> <p>[I'm a Public School Teacher. The Kids Aren't Alright: <a href="https://bariweiss.substack.com/p/im-a-public-school-teacher-the-kids">https://bariweiss.substack.com/p/im-a-public-school-teacher-the-kids</a>]</p> <p>As we already know, the teachers unions have played a central role in silencing any opposition. I'm asking our Board and the teachers to please stop underestimating and diminishing parents. You behave like those are your kids. They are not. Stop usurping your authority over our children. These poor kids have been horrifyingly brainwashed over covid. If there were no children, there would be no teachers, no school, no board of education. Children are the most important piece of the puzzle. D25 Board and teachers failed to recognize it and they failed children miserably.</p>
Agnes Zapart	<p>I know the recent judge's ruling in the TRO case did not make everybody happy, but why are we even considering wearing masks when CDC statistics show that a case of the flu is four</p>

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	<p>times more dangerous than a case of Covid (alpha and delta variants). Omicron is far less deadly and a case of the flu is probably ten times more dangerous than Covid spreading right now. Regarding the Covid vaccine, at the beginning of this month, CDC admitted that the vaccine has failed in terms of protecting you from the virus as it mutates. They're now saying that this vaccine can now permanently compromise people's immune systems. So why are some people still proponents of masks and vaccines? Anyways, this discussion should not be happening at schools, yet the indoctrination and damage done to kids at schools for the past two years are on full display now and...it made me look closely at the curriculum, the district strategic plan heavily emphasizing DEI, overly cynical emphasis on race, gender and sexual orientation, and the overuse of electronic devices at school. That is the reason more and more parents, including myself, are considering better schooling options for their children. Some parents have already left District 25. This is a direct consequence of the decisions that our district has been making in the last 2 years. The D25 superintendent, board, law firms, and teachers union all played a role in driving children away from our schools and helped destroy the institution of public education.</p> <p>Nearly 2 Million Kids Left Public Schools From 2020 to 2021  <a href="https://thefederalist.com/2022/02/21/nearly-2-million-kids-left-public-schools-from-2020-to-2021/?utm_source=rss&amp;utm_medium=rss&amp;utm_campaign=nearly-2-million-kids-left-public-schools-from-2020-to-2021&amp;utm_term=2022-02-21">https://thefederalist.com/2022/02/21/nearly-2-million-kids-left-public-schools-from-2020-to-2021/?utm_source=rss&amp;utm_medium=rss&amp;utm_campaign=nearly-2-million-kids-left-public-schools-from-2020-to-2021&amp;utm_term=2022-02-21</a></p> <p>"A new poll from National School Choice Week uncovered that 52% of parents considered, or are considering, new schools for their children in the past year."  <a href="https://dailycaller.com/2022/01/18/poll-parents-school-choice/">https://dailycaller.com/2022/01/18/poll-parents-school-choice/</a></p>
Margaret Waz	<p>While the mask mandate is gone, I'm not here to criticize anybody's personal choice to continue to wear a mask or not. However, I am disappointed with our teachers who are educated people but still failed to recognize masking is about pure control and power and has nothing to do with medicine, health or safety. It is very concerning to me how teacher unions have helped shape pandemic policies in Illinois                  (<a href="https://www.thecentersquare.com/illinois/teacher-unions-help-shape-pandemic-policies-in-illinois/article_b37945ea-8a89-11ec-9802-572398d638a3.html">https://www.thecentersquare.com/illinois/teacher-unions-help-shape-pandemic-policies-in-illinois/article_b37945ea-8a89-11ec-9802-572398d638a3.html</a>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Teacher unions have used campaign spending, political organization and collective bargaining power to influence policy decisions during the pandemic."</li> <li>- "The Chicago Teachers Union, the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers have used their collective influence to push for mask mandates, vaccine rules, remote learning, hiring practices, substitute teacher requirements and paid time off amid the COVID-19 pandemic."</li> <li>- "Teacher unions have also been vocal about mitigations in schools, at both the state and local level throughout Illinois, including mask mandates and vaccine requirements. They were highly critical of district judge's recent decision ruling Pritzker's school mask mandate "null and void," calling it a "threat to keeping Illinois schools open for in-person learning."</li> <li>- "Teacher unions have always had a scratch-my-back relationship with politicians and we've seen that playing out in the COVID era. They want more remote learning and mitigations."</li> <li>- "They have very strong collective bargaining power and they are using that power. The unions have oversized power over parent's rights."</li> <li>- "Teacher unions are among the top donors to some of the state's most powerful Democrats, including Gov. J.B. Pritzker, Senate President Don Harmon, D-Oak Park; and House Speaker Emanuel 'Chris' Welch, D-Chicago. In the most recent election cycle, 94% of campaign donations from teacher unions went to Democrats."</li> </ul>



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Padmavathy Appandai Raju	<p>The present 4th graders are too young to fit into the middle school atmosphere. They haven't been made ready as a last year of the elementary and to enjoy and relish this current year. Also mentally they wouldn't be prepared to accept this change right in the third trimester of the year. Given the impact COVID has given in our kids in the last two years this kind of change would be too harsh on the current 4th graders to directly switch to middle school environment. This motion of switching 5th grade to the middle schools in sd25 should be discouraged.</p>
Malgorzata Olszanski	<p>Here is a very intriguing insight from a teacher on reasons behind our school systems insisting on masking, which also applies to public school curriculum:  <a href="https://childhoodmatter.com/2022/02/17/dumbing-down-our-kids/">https://childhoodmatter.com/2022/02/17/dumbing-down-our-kids/</a></p> <p>"Another book I read...was Dumbing Us Down:The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling by John Taylor Gatto. Gatto posited that our schools only exist to train children to comply - not to think. According to Gatto, the children who are most successful in school are those who can best follow rules without question. After working in Early Childhood Education for 30 years I believe he was right. We are destroying peoples ability to think critically in order to make them compliant with a system that go against their nature...I believe classrooms should follow the model of children's museums. create a rich environment full of interesting items for children to interact with, and then add teachers who will simply monitor for safety and provide key questions that guide children's thinking - and otherwise allow the children to figure things out for themselves. Teachers are simply guides - they should be asking questions - not giving answers. Masking is a whole new level of compliance...A compliant person is much easier to control - a free thinker is dangerous to an authoritarian leader...Currently the leading cause of death in America among 18-45 year olds is fentanyl overdose - but nothing is being done about that. We instead are all fighting over a virus with a 99.98% recovery rate. Something is very wrong."</p>
Jennifer Anderson	<p>I, along with many other parents in the district, would appreciate hearing more context and detail around how the most recent pandemic procedures were developed. I'm specifically concerned about the lack of congruence between published recommendations from the CCDPH and Dr. Bein's statement that the mitigation strategies were developed while "working with the Cook County Health Department."</p> <p>This statement raises questions because the CCDPH guidance at the time D25 was drafting our current procedures was to have "universal masking; physical distancing; contact tracing; isolation and quarantine for confirmed cases and contacts; good indoor ventilation; and adherence to handwashing and respiratory etiquette."</p> <p>In contrast, D25 chose optional masking, elimination of contact tracing, elimination of close contact quarantine, and lax social distancing.</p> <p>Did the CCDPH review and approve the current plan based on factors specific to our district? I'm sure you can understand the feeling of unease when parents are told one thing by public health officials and another by the district. In the spirit of transparency and open communication with the community, I look forward to additional discussion and details about this policy in tonight's meeting.</p>
Leah Ross	<p>Thank you for understanding that Governor Pritzker has been violating our due process. Thank you for acknowledging the urgent need for so many children and teachers to move to mask optional. It's beyond time and past due, but the healing has begun.</p> <p>Afterall, ending aggressive mitigations based on "guidelines" or "feelings" would have left us in a never ending land of imposing controls that have never been proven to work in the first place. First, health guidelines are not always entirely enforceable nor even necessary for for all. Families must have the autonomy to make these applications. Second, feelings of comfort and risk assessment will always be relative to individual truths and circumstances. Finally, without a</p>



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	<p>concrete measure of these specific controls working or not working, how would we ever have had an off ramp for them? We didn't have one. We wouldn't ever have had one. Parents, lawyers, judges and our state legislature BUILT us our off ramp and I'm so thankful that you, as our district leaders, chose to immediately take it.</p> <p>Choice has been the way since the beginning. We now understand so much more about kids and Covid, transmission in schools and the harmful consequences of masking and/or excluding learners during critical years. We will never all agree on one path or one truth; no one kind of parental perspective has a monopoly on worry; and nobody can demand a school district's administrators and teachers transform into full time health officials.</p> <p>Thank you for letting these controls dissolve into a history that we will never forget. Viruses aren't gone. Covid isn't gone. But we have lived among viruses and their potential for ugliness forever and will have to persevere. Controlling the health of one's family is a goal of every parent, and all choices to help keep a family as healthy as possible are still there for the taking. Attempting to control health with sweeping mandates and one size fits all rules does not work and no longer means we exclude healthy children, track and report cases, force masking and cancel important events in our childrens' lives.</p> <p>Of special note to me: Please let our kids back into sporting events at their middle schools. They want to be with their peers in exciting environments! What a gift it is to have large groups of adolescents who want to be in their school building! Who have pride in their school and their fellow classmates! We should not be experiencing administrations that are herding children away from their schools as if they represent not only inconvenience to adults but dangerous disease? All under the guise of Covid controls with the explanation that students in bleachers at after school sporting events are a more dangerous Covid risk than children spending hours together in the classroom? Heads up: they will spend that time together socializing when you remove them from the building anyway. They'll also head right over to District 214 high school games where they ARE allowed to spectate amongst full crowds. End the theatre of the absurd. This is just one of a number of false illusions of control that must be permanently abandoned.</p> <p>So yes, I came here tonight to say thank you. Thank you for ushering us into this new age, and thank you in advance for ensuring that we continue forward progress.</p>
Martha Zaborowski	<p>First, I would like to commend the district and constituents for the continuous respect displayed in our community. As mask standards continue to be overseen in various courts, I would like to request that we take the lead from other school districts, such as district 203, to require masks for preschool students since they are the only age group ineligible to be vaccinated. The science is clear that vaccination protects you from severe illness, but &lt;5 children do not have that protection choice at this time. If we remove the protective layer of masks from our youngest community members, we are increasing the likelihood of exposure and risks to severe conditions such as MIS-C. Thank you for your consideration.</p>
Natalie White	<p>With the TRO ruling, I am glad that parents will be able to be parents and not the school district being the parents. Parents and taxpayers, not politicians should always be in charge of their schools. If it were four years ago, before covid, and kids voluntarily wore masks, say as a fashion fad, wouldn't administrators have had a fit about how it disrupts communication, promotes cliques or jeopardizes health? You know they would have! How could you accept this ESSER money? How could you demand teachers get vaccinated, can't people make their own decisions on their health?</p>
Michele Hilgart	<p>Dear Dr. Bein and members of the Board,</p> <p>The appellate court decision earlier this month made it clear that District 25 is free to implement its own mask mandate. "We note the language of the TRO in no way restrains school districts</p>

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	<p>from acting independently from the executive orders or the IDPH in creating provisions addressing COVID-19. Thus, it does not appear the school districts are temporarily restrained from acting by the court's TRO."</p> <p>Despite attempts to frame this decision as beyond the District's control, it is apparent from several of Dr. Bein's recent communications that you are aware that the decision on whether or not to require masks lies with the District 25 school board and administration, and that you have chosen to make masks optional—not based on guidance from Public Health agencies and experts like the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics (both of which continue to recommend universal indoor masking by all students ages 2 years and older, staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status), but rather based on the guidance of legal counsel (presumably to avoid further litigation from the very vocal minority of families who oppose masking and the outside organizations driving their efforts). I hope that gamble pays off for you.</p> <p>Fortunately, for families like mine who rely on masking to protect vulnerable family members not eligible for vaccination, the majority of students in our school have opted to remain masked. Hopefully this will be sufficient to protect our kids where the district has failed them.</p> <p>What concerns me most at this point, is that this was never really about masking. This was a first test. And District 25 failed. I fear that in the months and years ahead there will be many, more important tests. I only hope that when the next one comes, you will take the duty of your position seriously and act in the best interests of students and the community, and not solely on the basis of legal risk.</p>
<p>Lisa Joseph</p>	<p>D25 Superintendent and Board Members, Here is an insightful article on How Billions in COVID Stimulus Funds Led to Dangerous, Tyrannical Policies in U.S. Schools: <a href="https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/covid-stimulus-funds-dangerous-tyrannical-policies-schools/?utm_source=salsa&amp;eType=EmailBlastContent&amp;eld=78691755-4889-4368-beac-7f6dcda2531e">https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/covid-stimulus-funds-dangerous-tyrannical-policies-schools/?utm_source=salsa&amp;eType=EmailBlastContent&amp;eld=78691755-4889-4368-beac-7f6dcda2531e</a></p> <p>Now it is clear to me it was all about money. However, as taxpayers whose money makes up more than 70% of our district's budget, we had the right to demand what is right for our children. It was not right for you to take their smiles away. It was not right to instill fear in them and make them question their own parents.</p> <p>Our children get bullying lessons at school, bullying is also part of D25 Board Policies, yet you didn't think it applied to you. Your policy is one-sided. It doesn't address bullying towards students. Please change your policy to extend it to everyone.</p> <p>In D25 "insights newsletter" from 2021 (<a href="https://www.sd25.org//cms/lib/IL01904427/Centricity/Domain/45/INSIGHT%202021%20FINAL.pdf">https://www.sd25.org//cms/lib/IL01904427/Centricity/Domain/45/INSIGHT%202021%20FINAL.pdf</a>), I read: "We represent you! The School Board is the guardian of the public trust and our board members take that job to heart...our board makes decisions and guides this District to be of service." I don't feel you took your job to heart and adequately represented concerned parents during the covid pandemic.</p>
<p>Michele Hilgart</p>	<p>Dear Dr. Bein and members of the Board, The appellate court decision earlier this month made it clear that District 25 is free to implement its own mask mandate. "We note the language of the TRO in no way restrains school districts from acting independently from the executive orders or the IDPH in creating provisions addressing COVID-19. Thus, it does not appear the school districts are temporarily restrained from acting by the court's TRO."</p>

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Jeremy Glass	<p>While I appreciate Dr. Bein's emails keeping us informed about changes resulting from the recent TRO, I (and many in the community) are wondering why the requirement to now be "mask recommended" rather than "mask required" is leading to other, non-mask related changes. One of the main points of the parents who paid for the lawsuit against D25 is that those who want to wear a mask still have that choice, and they can mask up to protect themselves from unmasked classmates. All kids are unmasked during lunch, though, so what is the reasoning behind bringing lunch back to normal so that there is no distancing?</p>
Lindsay Nugent	<p>Thank you so much for your February 5th email making District 25 mask optional. The past three weeks have brought so much joy to my girls' lives. We have friends and family in other districts who didn't immediately go mask optional. It caused so much unnecessary fighting and division between parents and school boards, who eventually all went mask optional anyway. Additionally, I read my kids your email from February 19th and they screamed in happiness and excitement. After two years, our kids deserve to get back to normal.</p> <p>I was lucky to be able to volunteer at Dryden all three days last week and saw kids fully wearing masks, not wearing masks and everything in between. Doing what makes them comfortable. Each student, staff and volunteer I encountered was pleasant and respectful to one another and it brought so much pride and a feeling of community that has been missing. It was beautiful to see all the smiles.</p>
Ewa Predota	<p>When you see tens of thousands of people in basketball arenas and football stadiums with no masks on, then you force a bunch of kids to wear them all day at school, there is something wrong with this picture. The forced masking of school-aged kids was not just wrong...it was illegal. School districts were never given this kind of power to force healthy kids to mask or quarantine. Our district was part of a political game and DeVore's lawsuit returned power to the parents. Some district leaders who decided to fight the mandates in court say they've exhausted all other options after writing to the governor's office, ISBE, state superintendent, and IDPH to advocate for localized mitigations. I was disappointed to see that District 25, having board members showing signs of opposition in regards to the mandates, was not strong enough to join such actions.</p>
Stacey Tobin	<p>Although I was disappointed that D25 decided to drop the mask requirement, I understand that there were potential legal consequences for not following the TRO. However, I do not understand the public health rationale for subsequent policy decisions: (1) dropping contact</p>

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Cassie Hrtanek	<p>I am very concerned that the Board is not following CDC Guidance when it comes to masking in schools. Student health and safety should be a priority. Why has the Board determined that the district will not follow that guidance?</p>
Alexis Hammond	<p>Dear District 25 Board Members,</p> <p>I write to you out of concern regarding the Cook County Department of Health Statement from February 18th, 2022. A portion of the statement reads:</p> <p>"The Cook County Department of Public Health continues to strongly recommend universal masking in PreK – 12 schools. Masking of all teachers, students, and visitors reduces transmission of COVID-19, allowing districts to maintain in-person education in their schools. Masking is a critical component of the layered mitigation strategies that keep students and schools safe. CCDPH urges schools to follow these strategies, recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which include: universal masking; physical distancing; contact tracing; isolation and quarantine for confirmed cases and contacts; good indoor ventilation; and adherence to handwashing and respiratory etiquette."</p> <p>I am encouraged by the fact that the Omicron surge is ending. I am encouraged by the dropping cases in our community and the hospital bed availability. I understand that Chicago and Cook County mask and vaccine requirements are going away for restaurants and gyms etc. However, masks will still remain in effect for places that are not optional for many including public transportation and hospitals. Families never have to attend a restaurant if they choose not to. They can minimize their family's risk of exposure. But, for children accessing their public school education, school needs to be safe and follow public health guidelines so that it can welcome each child into the building. I am unsure why the district is choosing not to follow public health guidance. Specifically choosing optional masking, elimination of contact tracing, elimination of close contact quarantine, and reduced social distancing.</p> <p>Recently, some members of the board argued for "local" control. They did not want the Governor controlling the District in regards to masking. Now the District has the ability to rely on local public health officials from within our own county, yet does not heed their public health guidance. If not relying on local public health officials, how is the District making these decisions and by whose authority?</p> <p>I ask that you continue to provide the families of District 25 with truly exceptional educations for their children in a safe environment for all students and their families.</p> <p>Sincerely, Alexis Hammond</p>
Virginia McDonnell	<p>I, along with many other parents in the district, would appreciate hearing more context and detail around how the most recent pandemic procedures were developed. I'm specifically concerned about the lack of agreement between published recommendations from the CCDPH and Dr. Bein's statement that the mitigation strategies were developed while "working with the</p>

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	<p>Cook County Health Department.”</p> <p>This statement raises questions because the CCDPH guidance at the time D25 was drafting our current procedures was to have “universal masking; physical distancing; contact tracing; isolation and quarantine for confirmed cases and contacts; good indoor ventilation; and adherence to handwashing and respiratory etiquette.”</p> <p>In contrast, D25 chose optional masking, elimination of contact tracing, elimination of close contact quarantine, and low, if any, social distancing.</p> <p>Did the CCDPH review and approve the current plan based on factors specific to our district? I’m sure you can understand the feeling of unease when parents are told one thing by public health officials and another by the district. In the spirit of transparency and open communication with the community, I look forward to additional discussion and details about this policy in tonight’s meeting. I also would like to know what will happen when the next wave comes and numbers go up?</p>
Zenek Piersa	<p>Dr. Bein and D25 Board, I'm interested in a report from you and your district lawyers on the TRO case. Were your legal advisors telling you this during the last few months?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mask and vaccine mandates are in violation of civil rights.</li> <li>- It is illegal to quarantine a healthy child.</li> <li>- If a public official issues an illegal mandate and that mandate results in death, they can go to jail.</li> <li>- ISBE doesn't have the authority to remove recognition status and withhold funding from schools that don't follow COVID-19 mitigations, such as mandatory masking.</li> </ul> <p>Did D25 lawyers need to wait for a court decision to say whether something is valid according to the law or not? Also, I'd like to tell the parents who are unhappy about the judge's verdict that they are completely free to keep their masks on, without unreasonable demands on everyone else around them.</p>
Jenny Haefliger	<p>I would like transparency and an explanation as to how the district arrived at the point we are at now. Mitigation after mitigation has been dropped - universal masking, contact tracing, social distancing in certain situations (possibly lunch), close contact quarantine, etc. - this is not in alignment with current CCDPH recommendations, or experts like the CDC or AAP. How did our district arrive at this point? Who is making these decisions, and with what guidance? The Appellate court dismissed the TRO and made it clear that districts can implement their own mitigations. It is so confusing to be told one thing by public health experts, only to turn around and see the opposite things happening in our schools. How were these decisions made?</p> <p>Covid mitigations will not be the only challenge our schools face, but what happens in the future when the next Covid variant arrives, and it’s possibly more dangerous? What is the plan? Is there a plan? What happens when the next non-Covid challenge presents itself? I am worried for the future of our district if there is not transparency in decision making happening now.</p>
Ewa Wojcik	<p>Dr. Bein and Board Members, I regained freedom for my four children in court. Long before that, you had a chance to do it for 5,500+ children by simply giving a choice. You decided not to do it. In the name of safety? Was it supported by science? Was it supported by law? Or was it supported by politics and covid money?</p> <p>On 2/1/22 my 16-year old daughter was excluded from school for not wearing a mask. This is how she explained to me her behavior, "If you want to wear a mask, fine. But don't force your</p>



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	<p>beliefs on anyone else. It's morally wrong. If you're scared of covid, just stay home. That's not my problem. I'm not scared of covid. You know why I really did it? Because my [1st grade] sister has health issues from the mask, so I did it to support my sister." On the first day with masks optional, my 1st grader said, "Mom, now everybody can see my face. My real face." On day 2, she said, "Mom, it feels normal without a mask. It feels like I was a baby and had so much fun." Her words mean the world to me.</p> <p>You knew that masks are causing health issues because I was one of the parents whose lawyer sent you a notice of potential medical claim in November 2021. It was ignored. In November I also sent the following request and I received no response: "If D25 School Board is going to insist on assuming the role of healthcare provider and continue implementing a mandatory mask policy, then I am formally requesting the Board provides all parents with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A copy of all risk assessments carried out by the school in connection with face masks.</li> <li>2. Confirmation that all staff and teachers have been fully trained with respect to health risks associated with face masks, including with regards to recognizing the health contra-indications from the use of same.</li> <li>3. A signed legal document detailing that D25 School Board will accept any and all liabilities for any mental or physical health damages related to their mandatory mask policy." <p>You couldn't tell me how our schools are supporting young children's emotional development while making them wear masks either.</p> <p>I also shared with you how Vandalia 203 district was trying to end the mask mandate, hoping it would motivate you. It didn't. There were other school districts, such as 11 or 140, that filed a lawsuit against ISBE and State Superintendent, which you were probably aware of: <a href="https://www.centralillinoisproud.com/news/local-news/eureka-cusd-140-board-moves-forward-with-lawsuit-against-isbe-state-superintendent/">https://www.centralillinoisproud.com/news/local-news/eureka-cusd-140-board-moves-forward-with-lawsuit-against-isbe-state-superintendent/</a> <a href="https://www.centralillinoisproud.com/news/local-news/el-paso-gridley-cusd-11-moves-forward-with-lawsuit-against-isbe-state-superintendent/?fbclid=IwAR1pYOhtVAXR43eXZ9WeRqb4t2-mP3hVZC5W6QCs6JX04Z0wYTcHYYNmNzA">https://www.centralillinoisproud.com/news/local-news/el-paso-gridley-cusd-11-moves-forward-with-lawsuit-against-isbe-state-superintendent/?fbclid=IwAR1pYOhtVAXR43eXZ9WeRqb4t2-mP3hVZC5W6QCs6JX04Z0wYTcHYYNmNzA</a></p> <p>Instead of taking action to challenge the mandates, you took action against parents at the TRO hearings, which in turn brought up additional questions. Did our superintendent make the board and community members aware of the stipulations and requirements associated with the ESSER funds? Did our board question their superintendent about the requirements? I didn't want this dirty money. No amount of money is worth keeping a mask on my children's faces.</p> <p>My father-in-law and my brother-in-law died from covid (they had underlying diseases). That doesn't mean the rest of my family should live in fear. Covid can now be treated effectively with proper medication and it is easily treatable at home. You can't get rid of viruses but you can live healthy and support your immune system.</p> <p>I've seen plenty of examples of covid mitigations implemented in our schools that defy safety (such as using a 15-minute mark for close contact, different rules for CAP, accepting faulty PCR tests). It's simply impossible to control the virus in the school setting.</p> </li></ol>
Domaradzka Zuzia	<p>My son was supposed to start Kindergarten at Olive this school year, but I made a decision to send him to a private school instead. When the pandemic started, everybody at his daycare was wearing a mask which caused speech delays and made my son a very shy boy. Before District 25 made their decisions regarding in-person attendance and masks for the 2021/22 school year, I knew I can't risk my child's development and I can say now putting him in an environment where he can freely express himself was the right decision. I've been closely following what's happening in District 25 and I am considering putting him and his younger</p>

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	<p>sister in a public school at some point, but it is still not a safe environment for my kids who won't be able to see expressions on their teachers' faces and learn proper pronunciation with teachers' mouths being covered. I must say this is very disappointing to me and I believe District 25 owns a good explanation for how we got to this situation. Tom Devore's TRO case and the judge's order are public record. Please bring your lawyers in publicly to explain in lay terms why they were advising a taxpayer public entity (and my tax dollars are paying these lawyers legal fees, so they have an obligation to the people) to hold the mask line. Have your lawyers publicly state their case, rationale for and arguments in support of any school board mask policies THEY DRAFT that are CONTRARY to existing laws, case precedence, legal processes, our constitutional rights as well as any legally required due process.</p>
<p>Nathan Ulery</p>	<p>If the situation was less serious, the last line of the Pandemic Procedures Update presentation would be laughable. The deck states, "Continue updates to community" which is insulting at best. Throughout the COVID response, Dr. Bein has been dismissive to parental concerns, refuses to respond to legitimate questions, does not share the recommendations she allegedly receives, refuses to explain her decision making process, and appears to relish in her intentional opaqueness and defaults to using lawyers as a cover for her refusal to be transparent. She refuses to share plans until as late in the process as possible, making it impossible for parents to provide input and feedback or make alternative arrangements. Parents have been forced to use the Attorney General's office to investigate Open Meeting Acts violations and FOIA requests to find out what is really going on. It is time for this Board to make it clear that this community, especially parents, deserve a responsive and transparent leader and if Dr. Bein will not become one immediately, the Board will find one who does.</p> <p>It is also important that this Board demand that it's superintendent not mislead parents. In her February 19, 2022 email to parents, Dr. Bein wrote, "After reviewing the court's rulings, working with the Cook County Health Department, consulting with our legal counsel, and reviewing our internal COVID-19 data, District 25 will continue in our mask-recommended environment." The day before, the Cook County Department of Public Health wrote that it "continues to strongly recommend universal masking in PreK – 12 schools. Masking of all teachers, students, and visitors reduces transmission of COVID-19, allowing districts to maintain in-person education in their schools." The superintendent should not imply that she consulted with public health officials and they agreed with her when she is implementing policies in direct opposition of their recommendations.</p> <p>Further, and to no surprise considering the horrible counsel Dr. Bein and the Board received during its fight with parents regarding the Open Meetings Act violation, Dr. Bein continues to get bad legal advice and should also be instructed to get better lawyers. While she stated she consulted with attorneys, the CCDPH correctly reminds school leaders that the Appellate Court, in its decision, states that the Temporary Restraining Order "in no way restrains school districts from acting independently from the executive orders or the (Illinois Department of Public Health) in creating provisions addressing COVID-19." It goes in to state that "Further, 77 Ill. Admin Code 690.1315(f) allows for school districts and certified local health departments to work in consultation with one another in the development of mitigation plans, policies, and procedures. The continued masking of teachers, students, and visitors in schools is consistent with the recommendations of public health experts."</p> <p>While no Board vote on COVID mitigating controls is on the agenda tonight, it is clear that this administration and Board are continuing to ignore the recommendations of public health officials. The current recommendations from the CDC, CCDPH, and other public health officials is to retain required masking in schools. We are all hopeful these recommendations soon change and we will embrace those changed recommendations once they are made. But until then, they should continue to be followed. The appellate court made it clear that the TRO does not interfere with a School Board's ability to implement its own controls. By removing</p>

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	<p>controls, against current public health guidance, you are making a political judgement. Ultimately, as members of the Board, you have to live with the moral consequences that you opted for political expediency over public health.</p> <p>I would describe the recent changes announced by Dr. Bein this past weekend as demonstration that Dr. Bein and her administration are throwing in the towel on controlling COVID. Refusing to do contact tracing because of inconsistent masking is lazy at best. (And of course, masking is only inconsistent because Dr. Bein decided to stop requiring it — even with the plaintiffs attorney and appellate court providing an option for the district to continue the masking requirement). There is no reason to stop contact tracing because it's a little harder. Contact tracing helps slow the spread and most importantly, allows families with immunocompromised family members to react to potential exposure. This decision is irresponsible, but not unexpected considering the way in which Dr. Bein has handled this entire pandemic.</p> <p>I am concerned about what this March 7th update will include. At least one staff member has shared with some parents that all lunch mitigating controls will be removed. If we look at the data Dr. Bein provided in her report, cases are at the same level as they were in August. In August, we had required masking and social distancing. And now it appears in March we will have kids sitting shoulder to shoulder with no masks. Dr. Bein can not claim that the continued removal of mitigating controls is due to fewer cases because the case rate is similar to the beginning of the school year. And to date, the public health officials recommendations have not changed. The only conclusion can be is that she does not take public health recommendations seriously and is irresponsible with how she handles the health and safety of our children.</p> <p>From the beginning, we have only asked that this administration and school board stay in its lane and follow public health guidance. We are all hopeful that guidance will be updated as COVID begins to be treated as an endemic. But until that happens, I will continue to be frustrated at the level of irresponsibility demonstrated by Dr. Bein and the Board's refusal to interject and redirect.</p>
Deborah Freudenberger	<p>Dr.Bein and D25 Board, I would like to know why D25 decided to make the sudden change of getting rid of all mitigation tools such as spacing and requiring a negative Covid test on students' return if they had covid-like symptoms. This is not following CCDPH/IDPH recommendations. IDPH website still reflects following physical distancing and testing for suspected cases. I would hope that D25 would still want to follow best practices in regards to keeping our children, staff, and community safe since these tools are even more important now that masking is optional. In addition, I would like the communication coming from the administration regarding procedural changes in regards to covid to be specific, clear, and allow adequate notice. For instance, I was not aware of South lunchroom changes next week (going from classrooms to "full" normal lunch) until a staff member mentioned it to another parent. I am sure there will be many more parents concerned once this change is made public, especially since there were 4 positive case notifications the first two days this week at South. I did not realize this change would be made from the letter Dr.Bein sent which vaguely stated "pre-pandemic" procedures. Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration. I hope you will take a pause and keep mitigation tools in effect as recommended by the public health agencies.</p> <p>Sincerely, Deborah Freudenberger Windsor and South Parent</p>
Jim and Cristina Small	<p>During the month of February, D25 has taken several significant actions to reduce or eliminate several pandemic related mitigations, but has not provided the community with sufficient rationale for the decisions being made. This has been frustrating as often the changes when</p>



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	<p>communicated are not in line with relevant health department guidance or other school districts. The board and administration has touted transparency as being a core value, but has fallen short in its promise thereby diminishing the community's trust. While it is expected with pandemic statistics thankfully reaching manageable levels that certain mitigations would be loosened, we expect that the district provide at least a minimum level of reasoning, including the facts and circumstances considered in reaching its conclusions for actions being taken. In addition, the Board should maintain additional focus on governing the communications of the administration to ensure adequate transparency is maintained.</p> <p>Further, we support the district moving forward with all day kindergarten and should focus on the option to build-out existing elementary schools to accomplish this.</p>
April Berry	<p>I am disappointed at the District's decision to move from masking required to masks recommended, but I am grateful that the vast majority in each of my school aged children's classrooms choose to remain masked. I recognize that my family's situation is different than many, but my family continues to mask despite being vaccinated and boosted to protect our 1.5 year old who is not yet eligible for the vaccine. We also mask to protect our two unborn family members who are due in April. What disappoints me further, is the district moving away from lunch time distancing mitigations and contact tracing, despite the CCPHD's recommendation to continue both in schools.</p> <p>I understand that masking and social distancing aren't going to be around forever, because they won't always be necessary. But couldn't we wait to drop all effective mitigation strategies until the entire community is eligible to be vaccinated?</p> <p>For those who are eligible and medically able: Vaccination is community care. For those who are physically able: masking is community care. Distancing mitigation during unmasked lunch/snack periods at schools is community care. Continued testing and contact tracing are both community care. I implore the district to participate in community care.</p>
Liz Osterhues	<p>Dear Dr. Bein and Board members,</p> <p>I understand that the issue of masking and mitigation procedures is an agenda item for this evening's meeting. Like so many other families, we are revlieved to see the positivity rate on a decline and are looking forward to a mask-free life in the near future. That said, it is not my place nor your's to determine whether or not masking in our schools is necessary. Nor is it up to the loudest parents with the squeekiest wheels bombarding you and social media with their pro or anti mask opinions on this matter to decide what is best. This is a decision that should be made based on current guidance from health and medical experts. In short, we all need to stay in our lanes and look to those who know best, who have the expertise and the research, to provide direction on what is necessary to keep our children physically and emotionally safe during this pandemic. As of today, the CDC, CCDPH and AAP ALL recommend continued masking in schools. While some of you are experts in education, none of you are medical or health experts. I know that every single one of you wants to do what is best for our students and our staff, yet implementation of that differs in opinion. We need to put opinions and beliefs aside, turn to the experts who do this for a living and base decisions impacting more than 5000 students and staff on scientific fact and health guidance. Please stop using the district's legal counsel's "interpretation" of what was decided 2 weeks ago by a down state judge as your rationale for dropping masks. And instead, choose to protect our students using CURRENT guidance from health experts. As of today, 2/24/22, the American Academy of Pediatrics, CCDPH and CDC all support continued layered mitigatgions in schools, that include masking, distancing, hand washing, optimal ventilation and cleaning. Below includes their most current guidance on mitigation procedures in schools:</p> <p>AAP (source: AAP.org, updated 1/27/22, most current guidance): "Wear well-fitting masks, especially during times of high community prevalence. In-school transmission has been</p>

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	<p>observed more often in school districts that did not enact mask requirements. All students older than 2 years and all school staff should wear well-fitting face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use), regardless of vaccination status. The AAP currently recommends universal masking in school, with an emphasis on indoor masking. An added benefit of universal masking is protection of students and staff against other respiratory illnesses that would take time away from school.</p> <p>Use outside spaces and/or spread students out, especially during times where masks may be down such as lunch (if climate and space permit).</p> <p>Provide adequate and consistent opportunities for hand washing and appropriate school cleaning techniques. School policies should protect the students, school staff and teachers using science as a guide."</p> <p>CCDPH (source <a href="https://cookcountypublichealth.org">https://cookcountypublichealth.org</a>, updated 2/5/22):          "The Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) continues to endorse the CDC guidance calling for universal masking in all schools. CDC guidance, updated January 12, 2022, continues to recommend "universal indoor masking by all students (ages 2 years and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. In addition to continued universal masking, CCDPH supports the layered mitigation strategy recommended by Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois State Board of education in their Joint Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools, which includes the following recommendations: Promote and/or provide COVID-19 immunization for all school personnel and eligible students. Facilitate physical distancing. Schools should configure their spaces to provide space for physical distancing to the extent possible in their facilities. Implement or provide provisions for COVID-19 diagnostic testing for suspected cases, close contacts, and during outbreaks, as well as screening testing for unvaccinated students according to the CDC's testing recommendations. Improve ventilation to reduce the concentration of potentially virus-containing droplets in schools' indoor air environments. Promote and adhere to hand hygiene and to respiratory etiquette. Encourage individuals who are sick to stay home and to get tested for COVID-19. Clean and disinfect surfaces in schools to maintain healthy environments."</p> <p>CDC (source <a href="https://www.cdc.gov">cdc.gov</a>; updated 2/7/22)          "CDC recommends universal indoor masking by all* students (ages 2 years and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. New CDC guidance has reduced the recommended time for isolation and quarantine periods to five days. For details see CDC's page on Quarantine and Isolation. In addition to universal indoor masking, CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple prevention strategies, such as screening testing. Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe. Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care. This guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies to protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households and support in-person learning. Localities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing)."</p> <p>Thank you for doing your homework and research on how to best keep our children safe and healthy in school during this time and basing your decisions on fact rather than opinion or fear.</p>

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	And thank you for your time and commitment to the education, safety and success of ALL of our students in District 25.
Kevin Michael	With the switch to masks being optional, there should be more of an emphasis on other mitigations, and yet we are seeing the opposite. Other local districts that have become mask-optional this month continue to use contact tracing for exposure to positive cases. District 25 should be doing the same. The district also needs to be encouraging and promoting an increase in the number of students enrolled in weekly SHIELD testing, and instead the option to unenroll is what has been promoted repeatedly in communications from Dr. Bein. Everyone wishes the pandemic was over, but it is not. We need to stop pretending that things are normal. Also, please continue to promote vaccination and host vaccination events, since there are still far too few adults and students in our community who are fully vaccinated. Teachers and adult visitors to schools should all still be wearing masks, since there is still an indoor mandate for Cook County. A lawsuit allowing the choice for students does not need to extend to employees or parents and visitors to the schools. I expect that the mandate will also be enforced at tonight's board meeting.
Paul Schumann	Please do not end all mitigations, such as social distancing at lunch. The ending of masks is enough to spike Covid cases within the District. Please consider voting on any mitigation changes, which are outside the recent court determined changes. Think of your employees and students. I do not understand how the District Administration can make these changes without considering the safety of the District. Please continue outdoor lunch for students, as this is a needed break for children who have chosen to continue to mask. No need to return to full "normal" when things are still far from normal. Board Members who follow science: please advocate for your staff and students. Other Districts in the area are not removing all mitigations, to this extent to date. Thank you.