

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

April 15 – April 29, 2021

Hello. Congratulations to the new BOE members from the April elections. I am looking forward to the new members working closing with our stakeholder groups and getting more involved in our district! I am writing to the BOE today to address the COVID metrics dashboard on the website. I wrote to the BOE last month and inquired about how the BOE will make decisions moving forward regarding the metrics and the decision to keep schools open. Is the dashboard still a relevant tool that the BOE is using to help them make informed decisions about school reopening? Based on the current dashboard and previous BOE decisions, it's confusing that the decision to return to school was made given half of the metrics do not support reopening. Will the BOE be addressed the metrics and revamping the metrics so there is clarity for district families as to when and under what circumstances the district would close again due to the metrics not supporting continued in-person learning? Thank for addressing this concern so families can understand the local and community metrics further and understand when schools will open/close.

Board, while I do plan to send my child to full in-person learning in the Fall 2021, my child has benefitted from the quality of education that D57 offers via remote learning for this past school year. Looking ahead, not every family can or has the choice to risk their family's health by sending their children to school in-person. Additionally, we don't know what the state of our area or the country will be in terms of COVID 4 months from now, given break-through cases and new variants popping up. Please allow parents to choose remote learning with a dedicated teacher (no livestream) if they need for next school year. Allowing families to choose by quarter or half year at a time would give parents peace of mind that they do have flexibility should our nation's COVID situation suddenly worsen. Thank you for your consideration as we have been so happily relieved at the choices made thus far in accommodating every family.

I'd like to think that by Fall, our kids wearing masks all day will be a distant memory. Given the ease of access to vaccines, testing and knowledge of other forms of treatment, our kids should be able to resume to a normal school life.

I wanted to address the summer school topic that was brought up at the last board meeting. I still do not understand fully why you can't make this work for in-person for ESY and EL-learners. After almost a year of remote learning, I do not think a remote environment is the right fit for so many of our kids. "From a facilities perspective" or "staff schedules" is very vague. Can you please share more specific details and all the options you have looked at to try to make this work? We should not simply default to remote because that is easier. Also, I was recently made aware that Illinois public schools are getting ESSER funds. How much is D57 receiving and how are we using these funds? My understanding is that the intent of this money is to help bridge the gap for students who were not able to make good progress over the last year due to Covid. I know that there are a lot of tough decisions to make and I am really appreciative of the entire administration and school board, but I really am hopeful that the district is taking into consideration the needs of our students that could really benefit from in-person additional support this summer.

Thank you to Gerald McCluskey and Brian Maye for all of your time and energy spent on the District 57 Board of Education. You have been strong, passionate, and impartial board members and are true assets to the d57 community. Thank you for your service and best of luck in your future endeavors.

Can you please advise on why grades k-4 need to bring a chromebook back and forth to school everyday and get penalized when it isn't charged? How much screen time is occurring during the day? I'm concerned with excessive screen-time during in person learning. These grades were not responsible for

daily back and forth of Chromebooks pre-covid would like the it to remain in the classroom again for my 3rd grader. She does not use it at home.

Good afternoon, I am writing today to remind you how important a quality remote learning option is to so many of the families in our district, including ours. We continue to remain extra cautious as we navigate the reopening of schools and other businesses in our community. We have two family members in our home who are at increased medical risk should they get COVID. Only one of them is eligible for vaccination at this time. Even once we are all vaccinated, we will need to be cautious due to concerns regarding break-out cases and variants. We have other extended family members and friends who are suffering long-term health effects from having COVID and those are risks we cannot take with the people who live in our household. Please plan for at least one dedicated remote teacher per grade, as live streaming is not in the best interest of the remote learning children or the teachers who will need to juggle instruction between those at home and those at school. Also, please permit parents to choose the remote option based on smaller periods of time vs. the entire year. Our family would love to have our daughter back in the school building and we are anxiously awaiting the time when we feel it will be safe enough to do so. That time will likely not come before vaccines are available to elementary-aged children and/or the criteria for herd immunity has been met, unfortunately. However, since we moved to this house specifically for the education our daughter would receive, we are very much hoping to continue to be a part of the D57 community. If vaccines or herd immunity are not reality by fall, our family will need a quality, dedicated, remote option. We are very concerned about what our options would be for educating our daughter without that option.

As I am so excited that our children are back at school, I am hoping that we could start the next phase of conversation in regards to face mass outdoors. As of today there is a decline in the positive covid numbers since last month; 43.8% of Illinois that has first shot vaccinated (which gives a 89% protection from the covid), a high number of people that have antibodies and the just the pure science that our children do not contribute to the spread of the coronavirus. I think it would be good and healthy for our children to have a break from the mask during recess. Is this something that the district is in the next phase of doing? Can there be a conversation about the importance of this?

We are writing to ask you to support, advocate for, and insist on flexible, quality options for the fall. It seems to make sense for the district to have a plan for the fall that allows for all students to be in person (the plan needs to be safe for all students). There also needs to be some flexibility in case herd immunity is not met prior to the start of the school year. Please encourage admin. to put students into cohorts based on their preferences in the survey as well as 4th quarter preferences. This can help provide some flexibility. If herd immunity is not met – there is a greater chance that the families who chose remote for 4th quarter would be more likely to need/request 4th quarter for the fall. Let's be honest, we ALL want our kids to have the benefits of in person learning. We are all hoping and praying that heard immunity will be met before the start of school in the fall. But to expect families with medical conditions to potentially risk the health or life of a child or family member is not appropriate during a pandemic. There is still a pandemic going on. Until herd immunity has been accomplished – it is imperative that the district have a flexible plan that ensures a quality education for all students. • There is no reason why the district could not provide, at a minimum, the same plan they are currently offering. • If the district uses cohorts similar to 4th quarter, this will provide the most flexibility. If herd immunity is met all of the cohorts can be in person. If herd immunity is not met by late July/early August then surveying parents and taking at least one cohort for each grade and making it remote should be doable. • Let's say there are 25 kids in a remote cohort. If 15 need to stay remote, the other 10 could probably be fit into the in person classes. If there are 9 cohorts for each grade and 1 is remote, then fitting 10 kids into 8 classes is just adding 1 or 2 students to in person classes. • We have done things to keep students safe. The district has allowed for

small class sizes (sometimes just 14 students). Is keeping students with medical conditions, or family members with medical conditions, safe any less important? Are these students any less deserving of a quality education that is equitable to their peers? • For Lincoln Middle School, it would be helpful to put kids from families who chose remote (from both teams this year) on the same team next year. • In regard to students who receive “push in” academic services, putting students who chose 4th quarter remote on one team and the other “push in” students on the other team would help ensure a remote option is possible for “push in” students if needed. • It is important to plan to have enough rooms for all students to be in person (in case/when herd immunity is met). And, to plan so that at least one class per core subject per grade can be taught as a fully remote class if needed. • A full year commitment is not reasonable. Families need the option for their kids to return to in person learning when herd immunity is met. Please ensure there is a plan that allows families to choose quarter by quarter. It is not reasonable to ask parents to make a binding decision at this point in time. There are too many variables. When will herd immunity be met? When will vaccines be available to students? How prevalent will break through cases be? Will variants change things? Students deserve the opportunity to return to in person learning when herd immunity is met. Putting a plan in place now but not finalizing it until early August is consistent with what has been done in previous years. It is even more important this year. Nothing has to be finalized until classes/schedules are posted in August. Please ask administration to put their plan together now, survey families in mid to late July, and finalize the plan at that time. Thank you for continuing to advocate for remote learning so that a quality remote option is available for families that need it for the safety, health and well-being of their student or family members.