

D57 Community Comments

June 18- July 15 (noon)

I am writing to ask you to focus early on the mitigation strategies for covid for in-person learning in the fall. I know everyone is waiting for more guidance from ISBE| but we already know that the delta variant is spreading and the pathways to choosing remote learning on an individual basis are limited. It seems that every time the virus becomes more transmissible| our use of mitigations is reduced| which seems to defy logic. I am particularly concerned about my 6th grader. Of all the students not eligible for vaccination before school starts| I see that age band as the most vulnerable due to being in a crowded middle school environment where they are exposed to multiple groups of other students each period throughout the day. The outbreaks that occurred at D25 last year were both in their middle schools. Please consider cohorting at least that grade level until they have a chance to be vaccinated| and making plans to limit their exposure to other students during unmasked lunch time (distancing| small groups| outside?) I also believe that there is now funding for surveillance testing to catch asymptomatic cases. Has our district looked into this or reached out to D21 about lessons learned as they used it during last school year? What is the status of our ventilation system at Lincoln? Splitting our student population into in- and out-of-school groups was problematic| although it may still be necessary for certain students. But if the push is to have all students back in school| let's focus on making that the safest environment possible so that families can feel confident about sending their students back. ||Thank you||

I would like to know what the district stance is on masking? Given more recent studies| it appears that masks should not be needed and may even present harm. I kindly ask that there is an open discussion about this area at the next school board meeting. I believe masking has presented more psychological and social harm to our children. I would appreciate someone to take a stand and not just conform to policies that have no backing.

Hello! Thank you board president for responding to my email about mask guidelines for the fall. You stated that you will be following IDPH guidelines for masking in schools for the fall. Are those guidelines still the same or have they changed? Will parents expect the same Covid guidelines as the last school year| i.e. quarantine| social distancing| masks etc.? If masks are required| is the district going to allow mask free time for the students. Such as when they are at recess or at outdoor gym? I understand the need to follow IDPH and ISBE guidelines but is there not some ability for decision making at the local level? I believe many parents would like to have the choice about masking for the fall. On a personal level I go back and forth about masks being mandatory in school this fall. But ultimately the continuation of masking in schools should be a parents choice for what is best for their child. If the board could please discuss masking and Covid guidelines at the next meeting it would be appreciated by many parents| as we would know what to expect this fall. Thank you for taking the time to read this. I really appreciate all the time and effort you all put into making this district so great!

Dear BOE||Please consider not requiring kids to wear masks to school.| It seems redundant to have vaccinated kids mask. They have been running around all summer without a mask| so far| so good.|For unvaccinated kids| please allow parents to chose. There are risks associated with masking and risks associated with not masking. Please allow parents to accept this responsibility and decide what is appropriate for their family. Perhaps there could be sections of unmasked kids and sections of masked kids if that is more comfortable for parents? For Lincoln you could do a masked team and an unmasked team if numbers support that?|I'm just throwing out ideas here because I don't like to cite a problem without offering a solution; if they are terrible ideas| don't use them. I am just desperate to have my children in school without masks on their faces.|Thank you for your time and service.

Dear Mount Prospect Board of Education|||Speaking on behalf of the MPEA| as you make decisions for next year| we'd like to encourage you to follow the most recent CDC guidelines| which are also supported by IDPH that were released on Friday July 9| 2021. The CDC recommends requiring masks only for individuals who are not fully vaccinated and recommends at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms. ||In addition| we ask you to require proof of vaccination for any student to be at school unmasked. Using the honor system regarding vaccination status proves too big of a risk within our schools and community. Schools already collect personal information confidentially on other immunizations and yearly student physicals. ||Should you still be considering offering remote learning as an option for all| we would like to reiterate the impact of concurrent teaching on students| teachers| and the district at large as you work to form your final plans for the upcoming school year. ||Concurrent teaching is not ideal for students. Most teachers do not feel they successfully meet the needs of at home learners and in person learners simultaneously when using this model to teach. The vast majority of teachers were unsettled by the inequities that this model presents. Also| while several teachers shared creative solutions to bridge this gap| some things could not be avoided| such as lagging internet issues and technology malfunctions| at home learners not having the materials necessary due to responsive teaching (an unanticipated change in plans caused by lack of student mastery of a topic)| engaging at home learners and creating a classroom community| to name a few.||Additionally| we want to highlight the financial investment by the district to employ a concurrent teaching model. The district administrative team has shared the expenses due to enhancing technology. There would also be expenses incurred by staffing concurrent classrooms with teaching assistants| providing adequate plan time for teachers to manage the demands of concurrent classrooms| and providing stipends for teachers who bear these responsibilities. ||We ask tonight that you consider the following as you finalize plans for next year:||Weigh the emotional| social cost to students who are left to learn at home versus the very low case positivity rates that our district experienced last year due to strong mitigation efforts. While we understand some students may need a remote option| many would benefit from an in person experience. Consider making your criteria clear yet limited. ||Students aged 12 years and older are eligible to receive the vaccine| making this age group safe to return to school. The following is from the CDC website: A growing body of evidence indicates that people fully vaccinated with an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) are less likely to have asymptomatic infection or to transmit SARS-CoV-2 to others. ||Please keep in mind the differences between our middle school and our early education center and elementary schools.We ask that the district technology team meet with the middle school staff who would be participating in concurrent learning to discuss what technology they would need to be successful next year (versus the district just buying technology without consulting teachers). ||We appreciate your responsiveness to the pandemic and your consideration of our expressed concerns and recommendations. We understand that any new change can be daunting| but the guidance allows choice for families who come from a wide array of comfort levels. It is up to our district to determine a process that works best for students| staff| and our community. We are united in our efforts to keep students and staff safe.||Respectfully||The MPEA Leadership Team|

Dear D57 School Board Members||As we approach the new school year| and with Covid-19 still in our midst| I wanted to take this time to express my concerns regarding mask mandates and the quarantine requirements that D57 plans on implementing.||The CDC issued new guidance for school operations in regards to COVID-19. These guidelines were immediately adopted by the IDPH and the ISBE. The guidance brings schools in line with Phase 5 guidance for Illinois and gives local School Boards control of mitigation decisions. One of the major changes is to the school masking mandate. Masks are no longer required for vaccinated individuals. Masks are STILL RECOMMENDED not mandated for non-vaccinated individuals. Masks are still required for all public transportation| including school buses. Students| teachers| and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness.||The School Board should be supportive of continuing to recommend mask usage for non-vaccinated individuals but NOT MANDATING universal masking of students and staff| with the exception of transportation. I ask that the School Board please respect the guidance from the CDC| ISBE| and IDPH--this does not equate to mask mandates. Under Title 23 of the Administrative Code| The Illinois State Board of Education is not in a position to force| reward| or threaten any school district/local board of education regarding said agency guidance. The same rule applies to ISBE on any stipulated guidance. Governor Pritzker accurately states what the guidance says. It says "should" which is not mandatory. Also| the Governor leaves out that the CDC also says local districts may choose to not implement these guidelines. The School Board does have local control over its own district.||IMPORTANT FACTS: IllinoisPolicy.org||*No disciplinary action should be taken against a student who does not have a mask as described in the U.S. Department of Education COVID-19 Handbook| Volume 1.||*Vaccination encouraged| not required.||*Masks are not required for vaccinated persons but are still recommended for unvaccinated ones.||*Schools are encouraged to keep students in classrooms at least 3 feet apart. The CDC said this is not required.||*Quarantining-Students and staff who are fully vaccinated are not required to quarantine after close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the absence of symptoms| nor are they required to undergo testing in such instances. Persons who are not fully vaccinated are still subject to quarantine requirements in cases of exposure. However| students who were exposed in a CLASSROOM SETTING are NOT subject to quarantine if: (1) they and the person with COVID-19 were all wearing masks and (2) there were other mitigation strategies in place| such as ventilation| physical distancing| etc.||If legal liability is truly a risk for not following IDPH "guidance" by a local school district| PLEASE show me in the Illinois School Code and/or Title 23 of the Administrative Code| or anywhere else in the law| where this is written? Is there a law that is written when a public official tells you something and it must be done?||The IDPH has no jurisdiction to dictate what happens in a school at this time. We are no longer under an emergency order that demands guidance for our schools and communities. Dr. Ezike and Dr. Tokars advise and direct the IDPH| but are employed by Governor J.B. Pritzker's Office. There are 847 Illinois school districts and 100 are already saying masks are optional and more districts are looking to follow this lead to name a few: Barrington| Oswego| Waukegan| Jacksonville| CUSD 10| D300| Lemont| Unit 5| Orland Park| Bridgeport| and many more. Oswego Stated that masks should be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated. The district does not have a masking mandate or policy requiring students and staff to disclose their COVID-19 vaccination status and/or decision to wear or not to wear a mask while in person at school/work. This direction is subject to change based upon changes in applicable factors including an increase in COVID-19 or revised public health guidance. I fully support taking the responsibility off of the School Boards and putting it on the parent(s). We also need to remember that we are a significantly smaller school district with approximately 2| 200 students. That is approximately 550 students per building. ||Dr. Fauci has indicated that face mask policies should be relaxed with Covid rates dropping as a result of immunity and vaccinations. People have to take precautions and judge their own individual risks rather than forcing restrictions and masks on healthy adults and children. According to the CDC| before the Teacher's Union got involved| there was little evidence that schools contribute meaningfully to increase community transmissions or that students are at risk of spreading Covid-19. It is a time to let our children and our schools return to normalcy.||We do know that the vaccine doesn't prevent infection or transmission. ||At a press conference in January| Dr. Fauci could not have been more clear. Asymptomatic transmission was not a threat: The one thing historically people need to realize is that even if there is some asymptomatic transmission| in all the history of respiratory-borne viruses of any type| asymptomatic transmission has never been the driver of outbreaks. The driver of outbreaks is always an asymptomatic person. Even if there's a rare asymptomatic person that might transmit| an epidemic is not driven by asymptomatic carriers.||In closing| I trust your leadership will reflect support of parental consent| civil rights| and all liberties protected by the laws| regulations| will not be discriminated against based on those decisions and the constitution of Illinois and the United States of America. ||Per the Civil Immunities (745 ILCS 70/) Health Care Right of Conscience Act "It is the public policy of the State of Illinois to respect and protect the right of conscience of all persons who refuse to obtain| receive or accept| or who are engaged in| the delivery of| arrangement for| or payment of health care services and medical care whether acting individually| corporately| or in association with other persons or entities by reason of their refusing to act contrary to their conscience or conscientious convictions in providing| paying for| or refusing to obtain| receive| accept| deliver| pay for| or arrange for the payment of health care services and medical care." ||Per the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights "As school leaders respond to evolving conditions related to coronavirus| they should be mindful of the requirements of Section 504| Title II and Title VI to ensure that all students are able to study and learn in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination."||Per the FEMA Civil Rights Bulletin "Rights laws and legal authorities remain in effect| and cannot be waived| during COVID-19| Executive Orders| (or during) other disasters."||Per the Federal Law| Title 21 U.S.C. 360bbb-3 of the Federal Food| Drug| and Cosmetic Act "Individuals to whom the product is administered are informed--(I) that the Secretary has authorized the emergency use of the product; (II) of the significant known and potential benefits and risks of such use| and of the extent to which such benefits and risks are unknown; and (III) of the option to accept or refuse administration of the product| of the consequences| if any| of refusing administration of the product| and of the alternatives to the product that are available and of their benefits and risks.||I look forward to hearing from you||Irene ||

Please consider the young learners receiving speech therapy when devising mask rules. If masks are going to be required please implement plastic screens or something so that the SLP's can see the students mouth and the students can see the teachers.

Hello. ||I would like to ask that until children of all ages can receive the covid 19 vaccine| children and adults should be required to wear masks during school and at pick up and drop offs. Thanks.

Dear D57 BOE|| I wanted to voice my opinion that parents should be given the choice whether or not their child should wear mask this fall at the start of the school year. Reasons are as follows:• Community transmission is minimal|- Children are already going maskless in every other aspect of their lives: playing at friends' houses| athletics (indoor and outdoor)| church| camps| etc. Masks in school would just be a charade and not offer any further protection.|- Any adult can get vaccinated at this point and children have| statistically| had minimal risk from COVID. |Thanks|

Hello| I am writing you today to please maintain the masking policy for all students and staff while indoors. So much of our student population is not eligible yet for vaccination. As an advanced practice Nurse I feel that it is unreasonable to unmask while indoors especially with a decrease in the 6 ft distancing. If a person tests positive in an unmasked classroom you will have to quarantine the entire classroom for 2 weeks. This is not only disruptive to the students learning but also becomes very difficult for families who have returned to in person working. Thank you for your time and consideration

Dear Members of the Board of Education| ||Given the incredibly optimistic statistical evidence that covid poses minimal risk to students| I strongly advocate that the board vote for policies that FOCUS on student learning by ensuring the least restrictive learning environment for students AND promise students strong continuity in learning plans. ||I urge each board member to specifically support the above environment by voting for the following two policies: first| to make masking at school a family choice and second| to request families to provide a properly timed negative covid test with doctor approval to return to school as sufficient documentation needed for identified close contact cases.||By voting for these two policies| the board will be demonstrating a full understanding of student life outside of school. The board would be supporting an equitable experience at school that mirrors that of student life outside of school. At the same time| the board would be protecting families rights by giving them the power to exercise precautions by choosing to wear masks at school if they wish to. ||Furthermore| recent studies indicate that prolonged mask wearing can actually hinder student's learning ability and increase other health problems. Here is a brief summary of what studies have already shown as drawbacks to students wearing masks during school hours: face masks impair verbal and non-verbal communication| block emotional signaling between teacher and learner| and make it harder to hear the speech of the teacher and other students. Some health drawbacks of prolonged mask wearing include: Headaches| skin infections caused by bacterial| increase in carbon dioxide inhalation| rebreathing of any virus| allergens| etc.| fatigue| feeling of tightness in breathing| poor oxygenation during physical activities (gym class| recess)| wearing a face mask makes the exhaled air go into the eyes. This generates an uncomfortable feeling and an impulse to touch your eyes. If your hands are contaminated| you are infecting yourself. Because of problems with understanding speech| people may move closer together| without intention| and thereby increase infection risk. Student-age covid statistics demonstrate over a 99% recovery rate and also indicate that schools are not superspreaders.||To reiterate: board members who exercise critical thinking and choose to vote for optional masking wearing AND a negative covid test with doctor approval to return to school for close case contacts will demonstrate science based understanding and will support equitable life experiences for all students in D57. Now is the time. Teachers and staff have had the opportunity to be vaccinated and can still exercise mitigations that are so appropriate for their situation if they wish to. Now is the time to focus on learning and a school experience that reflects student life outside of school.||Please vote for these two policies. It reflects a "win-win" scenario and would allow the board to begin to rebuild trust with the district families that was severely broken last school year. Please put the power back in parents' hands to make health decisions for their own child. Please put the power back in educators hands to be able to return to best educational practices. Please return the focus onto solid core academic foundations. |

Masks need to be optional for all grades. Both my children attend D57 and they both are on IEP's. One is specifically for delay in speech and a mask prohibits true progress. The other was on an IEP for speech and was recently removed but she still needs to participate in group speech sessions for further progress. At this point every teacher who wanted to vaccinated has been given the chance. Children especially young children are extremely low risk for contracting the virus. Parents who want their kid(s) masked can still send their kids in masks. Masking children in school is not a law. I want the choice to parent my children how I see fit for their needs. My children my choice.

Hello D57 Board Members Please follow the science and make masks optional for ALL students in D57 - vaccinated or not. Our kids have suffered the most during the pandemic - from a social emotional and educational standpoint. Please do not continue to make them the primary victims of the pandemic. There is no need to continue to make decisions out of fear. Please take these facts into consideration: 1. Educators were made a priority for vaccination. 2. Illinois especially the Chicagoland area has one of the highest vaccination rates. 3. Children over the age of 12 (typically 6th graders) are eligible to receive the vaccine. 4. According to a recent JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association - the largest national association of MD's and DO's) study children wearing face masks inhale air with carbon dioxide content at minimum 3 times greater than the limit allowed for closed rooms. The youngest children in the study (ages 6, 7 and 8) had the highest carbon dioxide content of inhaled air. (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2781743>) The health effects of carbon dioxide exposure at these levels include impaired judgment, thinking skills and decision-making ability; headache, lethargy and emotional irritation. Parents must be allowed to take back control of their child's physical and emotional wellbeing. Therefore I respectfully ask again that D57 makes masks OPTIONAL for ALL D57 students.

Hello I am a parent of 2 children that attend D57 and one that graduated in 2019. I am also a parent in your district that wants a choice on masks in schools. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recently communicated to officials at public schools across the state that school districts have the power to make masks optional this fall. Please make masks optional this fall. Our children have been through so much for over a year and it is time to please make the right decision and leave the decision to mask or not mask up to the parents and kids. As a district under ISBE's new guidance you are empowered to make this decision for our kids. Giving parents and kids a choice in this decision is compassionate. Please make masks optional this fall. Thank you for your time.

Board Members - I am writing today to express my opinion regarding the in-school mask requirements for the D57 system. I am aware that some school districts are considering possibly moving forward with optional mask requirements for unvaccinated students during in-person learning for the 2021 school year. While I have supported every effort to re-open D57 throughout the 2020 school year I do not support optional mask requirements for unvaccinated students. My opinion is such that unvaccinated students should continue to wear masks while inside the school building and have the option to remove masks while outside the school building. In short please keep it simple Masks on inside Masks off outside. We have just put ourselves through an excessively complex and tumultuous school year let's not give ourselves and our students more to concern themselves with. The vast majority of students within the D57 system are not eligible for vaccines and likely will not be until year-end 2021 at earliest. Students have adjusted to mask requirements last year and moving to an 'optional' or 'flexible' approach really just complicates all that progress. At a minimum after all the surveys and requests of parents conducted throughout the 2020 school year the board should solicit the comprehensive perspectives of the parents in the D57 system before moving forward with any changes to the in-person mask requirements. Thank you all again for your vigilance and commitment to ensuring the best-in-class approach to the D57 school system.

As we look into the fall school year I would like to contact you about two important items: 1) I would hope the admin and BOE will look to amend the 14 day quarantine. My hope is that you can look at the whole picture vs. what IDPH recommends. The vaccination rate in the Chicagoland area is high and transmission rates of COVID-19 are quite low. And our staff have had the chance if they would like to receive full vaccination so they would not have to quarantine. Also if they were a positive case in a classroom most family members at home are fully vaccinated. On the flip side a 14 day quarantine is very disruptive to the children's learning consistency/structure emotional well-being and the families schedule. I understand we need to be mindful of mitigation and reduce the spread thus this is my suggestion. According to CDC which in turn are IDPH guidelines "Our local public health authorities make the final decisions about how long quarantine should last based on local conditions and needs. Follow the recommendations of your local public health department if you need to quarantine. Options they will consider include stopping quarantine: after day 10 without testing or after day 7 after receiving a negative test result. Perhaps a medical advisory to the admin and BOE would be helpful to give guidance on some of these items." 2) The second item is masks. I realize they will be recommended by IDPH during school. I was hoping you would consider a mask free option when they are outside. Right now summer camps are mask free outside and this provides a much needed break for the children. I understand not every parent will be comfortable with masks off so perhaps you can just indicate it as a choice for the parent. Also perhaps looking at a mask phase out as vaccination are more widespread for children under 12. Thank you for your time.

I am the parent of 3 children at D57. I am writing to urge the Superintendent and board members to take a more progressive approach to the start of this school year. Last year D57 took a very cautious approach to reopening the schools. This led to paralysis by analysis while communities like Peoria (double the population of Mount Prospect) offered full day in person learning for their students on day one of the school year. The lesson learned should be that we have to learn to live with these situations and navigate through them while still providing the services expected by the community. Let's not start off this school year with unnecessary restrictions. Life has moved past the mask mandates. It all stopped the moment school ended in June. Not one business or building that we have entered since then has required a mask. We have been to community pools stores churches city hall hotels and private indoor sports classes. No establishment required a mask. It is not logical to suggest that school is the one place where mask are mandatory and yet navigate through every other part of our lives successfully without a mask. Children form their feelings and impressions based on positive or negative experiences. Telling them that school is the one place where masks are mandated gives them a negative association with that environment. They are smart and know that this does not make sense. Our children have endured more psychological stress than we ever dared too. School was a normal place that offered freedom and independence to grow and make friends away from the home setting. That has been stripped from our children. The masks take that away all in the name of "safety". This loosely defined term that has been stretched to excuse the inexcusable. Children playing soccer outdoors in sweltering summer heat while wearing a mask is the antithesis of safety. Yet the Mount Prospect park district required it for participation. Many other districts in Illinois are opting for masks to be optional. They are placing the choice with the parents. I urge you to make that same choice. Ultimately every school district across this nation will return to a maskless environment. Let's lead the way back to normal instead of starting off the year with resistance and surveys. Make it simple and let the parents choose.

As you plan for the upcoming school year please mandate that masks be worn by all teachers / staff / parent volunteers until the students are able to be vaccinated. This mandate should also apply to all students. Anyone unwilling to be vaccinated should be required to continue masking even after the students are able to be vaccinated. Thank you.

I know that you are all working very hard to plan for the upcoming school year and that recommendation and guidelines keep changing. Our family chose the concurrent model due to health concerns for our oldest child and lack of vaccines for our children ages 6 and 9. When ISBE changed the requirements for remote instruction we were disappointed as we knew our children would not qualify for remote under the new guidelines. I am asking that you continue to require masks for everyone in the school until all of our student population can be vaccinated. If school starts with a mask optional policy I don't know what families like mine will do if they don't qualify for remote instruction and in person is not a safe option for them. Thank you for all that you do!

Please continue requiring masks for kids in D57 schools. Since the younger kids cannot even be vaccinated it is imperative to protect all unvaccinated. The delta variant is very efficient at infecting kids.

As a member of the Mount Prospect community I am very concerned that some extremely vocal members of our community are pushing against all reasonable safety protocols as we enter the 2021-22 school year with most young children still not vaccinated. Masks are effective. Until we are able to assure a larger percentage of the student body and community are able to be vaccinated let's use the preventative methods we know work to keep everyone safe. Let's be responsible. Prioritize public health and safety over the convenience of a vocal minority.

July 14] 2021||To: District 57 Board of Education Members||We are writing to the board to respectfully request that the board consider the following information| and approve the concurrent option and cohorts for all grades| including 7th and 8th grade. In this letter we will address: ||Current information about covid and vaccines||The importance of the concurrent option||The Importance of Cohorts and a Safe Environment for Learners||Request for Detailed Plans for Safety||Masks ||||Current Information about Covid| Vaccines| and Risk||While the vaccines reduce the likelihood of getting a severe case of covid| they are not 100% effective against severe illness or death| even for people with no medical conditions.||Data shows the delta variant is significantly more transmissible. The delta variant is increasing in the US.||Data from Israel shows that fully vaccinated people are getting infected with the delta variant. About 50% of new cases in Israel are in fully vaccinated people. Israel has a better vaccination rate than the US. ||There is asymptomatic spread| even among the vaccinated. It may be reduced| but asymptomatic spread still occurs. ||There are break through cases in fully vaccinated people||4|427 fully vaccinated people in the US contracted break through cases of COVID-19 (after being fully vaccinated) that were severe enough to put them in the hospital. * from CDC website||879 fully vaccinated people in the US contracted break through cases of Covid 19 and died. * from CDC website||While the percentage who were hospitalized or died after being fully vaccinated might not be high| it certainly matters to the over 4000 people who were fully vaccinated and wound up in the hospital. And it certainly had an impact on the 879 families whose loved one was fully vaccinated but still contracted covid 19 and died. ||The Importance of the Concurrent Option||As much as we all wish the pandemic was over| it is not over yet. Asymptomatic transmission and break through cases occur| even among people who are vaccinated. A new more contagious variant is infecting fully vaccinated people| who can infect others around them. ||There are students who have medical conditions in their family where either the student or a family member could be at higher risk| even if they have the vaccine. Some people's bodies do not provide a strong enough immune response. For example| a grandparent with cancer may depend on kids/grandkids for help (or live with kids/grandkids). When someone is dealing with cancer| their body might not mount a strong enough immune response from the vaccine. Parents| siblings| and students could be in similar situations with different medical conditions. Some families may need to be more careful| even with vaccines. We hope the district will not leave these kids and families behind| no matter what grade they are in. ||Offering the concurrent option to all grades provides a safety net for families that need it. It also keeps the commitment the district made to parents.||There may be times during the school year when cases spike due to the delta variant or other variants. If the concurrent option is not available to all grades| some students might miss days or weeks of school. The concurrent option solves this problem. With the concurrent option these students would not need to miss school. But it needs to be offered to all grades.||We recognize that it would be easier to not have to provide concurrent for 7th and 8th grade. But this is not the time for what is easier. ||At a recent board meeting| teachers were advocating for a more robust option for students who need to stay remote. We know that D57 teachers care about their students and were not simply advocating for livestream to go away. If a more robust learning approach is not on the table and guaranteed| we are confident that D57 teachers would be willing to teach concurrently| rather than leaving some students and families in a position of deciding between an education for their child or putting a family member's health or life at risk. ||Fully vaccinated people are catching the delta variant. In crowded classrooms| students or teachers could catch it themselves and/or pass it on to a vulnerable family member. ||We are asking that the district be consistent in offering concurrent to all grades. Please don't allow 7th and 8th grade concurrent families to be discriminated against| particularly when the vaccine is not 100% effective. Does the district and Board want to be responsible if something happens to a student| teacher| or family member? That person who got covid| be it student or teacher| and spread it within the school to other vulnerable parties would carry the weight of that decision for the rest of their life.||The district asked parents to make a binding commitment in April. Parents specifically asked the question "If we commit to concurrent are we guaranteed concurrent?" Parents were told "Yes| if you choose concurrent| you are guaranteed concurrent". Please ensure that this commitment to parents is kept. ||So| the plan that the administration presented in the spring| the plan the board approved| the plan that families made a binding commitment to| the plan that administration assured parents that they were guaranteed of if parents made a binding commitment – that plan meets all the requirements the state put forth. It provides a space for every student in an in person classroom. It also provides some flexibility for families that might need that flexibility. It is the right thing to do. We are counting on you to continue to advocate for us and not to leave these students behind and without support. ||ISBE has just three requirements for a district to offer a remote learning or concurrent option. There is no need to impose further requirements. Please vote to keep the concurrent option for all grades and all families that chose concurrent. Please| keep the commitment that administration| and the new superintendent| made to families. ||Rest assured that concurrent families will do everything possible for our students to be in person as much as possible when it is safe for them. But there may be times that flexibility is needed. Offering the concurrent option to all grades provides the flexibility to make this possible.||The Importance of Cohorts and a Safe Environment for Learners||The CDC website references the importance of layering mitigation strategies (meaning using several mitigation strategies at the same time). With the objective of providing an education for all district 57 students in an environment that is safe for them we are asking the board to vote to keep cohorts for all grade levels. ||Cohorts minimize exposure and improve safety for students in all grades (including 7th and 8th grades). ||Some families may not feel comfortable sending their kids with hundreds of students passing in the hallways. Keeping cohorts for all grades increases safety and gives more students the opportunity to attend in person learning. ||Layered mitigation strategies are important because vaccines are not 100% effective and masks are not 100% effective| ||Hundreds of students passing in the hall during passing periods increases risk and decreases safety for students.||All schools in the district had cohorts in the spring| so we know this can be done. Classes taught at the regular level should be able to be cohorted. Specialized classes such as advanced or accelerated classes might require students to travel to those specific classes||Mitigations to improve safety and student's health (cohorting) should take priority over teacher's preference to teach in their own classrooms. Safety and health should always take priority over preference and the need for extra effort.||Request for Detailed Plans for Safety||Families in the district would greatly appreciate seeing a presentation from administration before the start of school regarding what will be done to keep kids safe in the fall. ||Have there been any improvements made to the ventilation systems above and beyond simply buying a good filter (particularly at Lincoln which has such large class sizes | small classrooms| and an old ventilation system)? What specifically has been done in regard to ventilation? What will be done?||Will there be air purifiers in the classrooms?||What safety policies will be in place? Specific information for each grade would be helpful.||What specifically was done with the money from the federal government? If it was not all used then what will it be used for? Will it be used for safety since a pandemic is still going on?||We can't think of any reason why the district wouldn't want to do everything possible to provide a safe learning environment for all students. Families would like to learn more about what the plans are for safety in the fall prior to the start of the school year.||Masks||Studies have shown that the virus can accumulate in indoor spaces in a short period of time simply by people breathing in that indoor space. *see previous articles sent to the BOE||Masks are important and definitely help but they do not provide 100% protection| especially in a crowded environment when other people are not wearing masks. Consistent wearing of masks by everyone in crowded indoor spaces helps mitigate risk.||Someone who is unvaccinated and does not wear a mask is not only taking on that risk themselves| they could be putting a more vulnerable student| teacher| or family member at risk (who either can't be vaccinated or who may not have as strong of an immune response to the vaccine). ||Mask wearing should not be optional| or on the honor system. All students should be able to learn in an environment that is safe. ||The CDC website states that unvaccinated people need to wear masks indoors. Will the school be checking and ensuring that unvaccinated students and staff are wearing masks? ||The CDC also states on their website that if 3 feet of distancing cannot be maintained then the layered mitigations are especially important. ||||At BOE meetings| board members have indicated they feel it is important for the district to: ||Provide a safe learning environment for all students|Make it possible for students to have the opportunity to attend in person learning|Provide a quality| equitable education for all students in D57||Failing to offer concurrent to all grade levels and group students into cohorts would: ||Not provide a safe environment for all students|Make it less likely that all students would have the opportunity to attend in person learning| and||Not provide an equitable education to all students in D57||Everything possible should be done to mitigate risk including concurrent learning option for all grades and cohorts for all grades.||If the district is not going offer concurrent to all grades and group all grades into cohorts then a more robust remote option should definitely be on the table| with the option to transition to in person learning when it is safe to do so.||Please request and vote for the following: ||Concurrent option for all grades (including 7th and 8th grade)| keeping the district's commitment to families that committed to concurrent| and providing a safety net for families that need it.||Cohorts for all grades| ensuring the district is doing making every effort they can to keep student's safe and make in person learning safe and accessible for all students.||Consistent mask wearing and/or a plan to ensure unvaccinated students are not placed in the same classes as students with medical conditions and could be at greater risk.||Please don't put families in the position of needing to decide if their child will miss days or weeks of school or if they are willing to put a family member's health or life at risk. Our hope is that the board will support a plan that is safe for all students. ||All students want to be able to come back to in person learning as soon as possible. Failing to provide these layered mitigations does not create a safe environment for all students to return to in person learning. ||Administration presented a good plan in the spring| the board approved that plan| and administration made commitments to families who chose concurrent that they would be guaranteed concurrent if they made the commitment. Please vote to keep that commitment.||Thank you for ensuring a quality education for all students in an environment that is safe for them.||The Remote Advocacy Group|

As a parent in the d57 community| I think it is incredibly important that the steps taken in schools to manage covid risks are done with the whole community in mind. In order to protect the children and the whole village| all unvaccinated people| whether by choice or due to age restrictions| must be required to wear masks indoors. I am aware that groups outside our community are attempting to pressure local school boards to drop mask mandates and I think that is unsafe. Thank you.

Please follow the Covid 19 guidelines. Now is not the time to ignore the safety of all the school children and their families. [Source: CDC 7/9/21]Masks should be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated. Consistent and correct mask use by people who are not fully vaccinated is especially important indoors and in crowded settings| when physical distancing cannot be maintained.|CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms| combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated| 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 other prevention strategies| such as indoor masking.

Masks need to be required until children can and are vaccinated.

I am a resident of Mount Prospect and a parent of a 5-year-old who will be starting kindergarten this fall. As a public librarian who works with children and teens| I believe in the value of public education. We have registered at Westbrook with the understanding that| similar to the policy at the library where I work| staff and children at the school will all be wearing masks. I've recently learned that a few residents want to pressure the D57 board to abandon the mask policy. These people do not represent the majority of residents| who understand that unvaccinated children are still at risk from the COVID-19 virus. I based my votes for D57 board members this April on who seemed like they had the best interests of all children in mind. I am especially concerned about children with asthma| diabetes| and other underlying conditions who are at a greater risk of severe complications from COVID. Even seemingly healthy children could experience lasting neurological damage that we don't really understand yet. These risks convince me that everyone at the elementary schools should continue to mask until young children have the opportunity to be vaccinated. Removing mask requirements before children are vaccinated would be a deal-breaker for me. I would remove my child from Westbrook for the 2021-22 school year. Parents shouldn't have to make this choice| and no one should feel that they are stuck sending their children to a school where they do not feel safe. Please continue to require masks for the safety of all D57 children.

Dear Board Members|We have been looking forward to coming back together with the Lions Park community this fall and feel that the concurrent option would be the safest way for our family to do so. We have two higher-risk family members in our home| including our daughter who will be in 4th grade at Lions. We are sincerely hopeful that the concurrent learning model will be a viable option for families like ours.||However| following the developments at the last board meeting| it is currently unclear whether or not we will qualify for that option. So we are also extremely hopeful that the District will put into place appropriate protections for in-person learners| the most important of which is the requirement that masks be worn at school until all children have the opportunity to be vaccinated. ||Thank you for protecting the higher-risk families in our district.

Good evening| |First of all| thank you for all you continue to do for our community and children. I am writing to express my hope that the board decides to require unvaccinated students to wear masks. It is currently projected that vaccines will be released for children 5-11 years old in September-October. I believe the mask mandate should be in effect until at least the time when all school children have the opportunity to receive the vaccine. We have not had schools fully open during the pandemic (or with the Delta variant) so we do not know how a fully open school will impact transmission. Please wait until after school begins and vaccines are available to all to re-evaluate mask usage. Thank you for your time.

Hello||Thank you for all you've done to keep our children safe and facilitate their return to school. ||This year| we hope that safety measures will continue mandate mask wear until all students can be vaccinated. ||Thank you!

Good morning Board members||I am writing to voice my opinion that unvaccinated children| staff and teachers should continue to wear a mask. I realize many parents are advocating for mask wearing to be a choice up to the parents. I don't think it is a big jump to assume that those advocating for choice will choose to not have their students wear a mask. I understand the argument of personal choice and I am in agreement of individuals having the right to make choices that concern them or their children. It is their right. BUT--what about my child's right to attend school without disruption? I fear that by loosening the mask requirement will lead to more cases of classrooms being quarantined for 2 weeks. As a community we are SO close to a "normal" school year. Is wearing masks such a big deal to disrupt what could be a full year of in-person learning? Inevitably| by not requiring masks| there will be cases of exposure which would lead to contact tracing and quarantining. This would disrupt the school year. In my experience| kids really don't seem to care about wearing their masks. Mine grab theirs as they walk out the door the same way they remember to put their shoes on. It is just automatic. Yes| no one likes that wearing masks is a way of life and as a vaccinated adult I am enjoying the freedom of not wearing a mask as much. But again| we are SO close to the finish line. Why not finish strong| wear masks and enjoy and nearly normal in-person school year?? Please follow the CDC recommendation that ALL unvaccinated people wear masks. (side note: I do recognize this becomes tricky to track with the upper grades| but should be easy for the younger kids since none have had the opportunity to be vaccinated yet)

The following was written by a friend and fellow parent of D57 children. I agree with what is said below and don't feel the need to rewrite it with my wording. ||I am writing to urge the Superintendent and board members to take a more progressive approach to the start of this school year. Last year| D57 took a very cautious approach to reopening the schools. This led to paralysis by analysis while communities like Peoria (double the population of Mount Prospect)| offered full day in person learning for their students on day one of the school year. The lesson learned should be that we have to learn to live with these situations and navigate through them while still providing the services expected by the community. Let's not start off this school year with unnecessary restrictions. Life has moved past the mask mandates. It all stopped the moment school ended in June. Not one business or building that we have entered since then has required a mask. We have been to community pools| stores| churches| city hall| hotels and private indoor sports classes. No establishment required a mask. It is not logical to suggest that school is the one place where mask are mandatory and yet navigate through every other part of our lives successfully without a mask. Children form their feelings and impressions based on positive or negative experiences. Telling them that school is the one place where masks are mandated gives them a negative association with that environment. They are smart and know that this does not make sense. Our children have endured more psychological stress than we ever dared too. School was a normal place that offered freedom and independence to grow and make friends away from the home setting. That has been stripped from our children. The masks take that away all in the name of "safety". This loosely defined term that has been stretched to excuse the inexcusable. Children playing soccer outdoors in sweltering summer heat while wearing a mask is the antithesis of safety. Yet the Mount Prospect park district required it for participation. Many other districts in Illinois are opting for masks to be optional. They are placing the choice with the parents. I urge you to make that same choice. Ultimately| every school district across this nation will return to a massless environment. Let's lead the way back to normal instead of starting off the year with resistance and surveys. Make it simple and let the parents choose.

In April of 2021| D57 proved to us that they are capable of bringing our students back to school| full-time in-person| safely| during a pandemic. Bravo! I was one of many advocates for this| and believe it was absolutely the right thing to do. In addition to the amazing work of each and every staff member| one of the big reasons this was possible was the universal masking policy. |I understand that there is a movement afoot to advocate for parents' choice on masking. I am writing today to ask you| as a school board| to NOT give parents the choice on this matter just yet| at least until all students have the chance to be vaccinated. If the CDC (and subsequently the IDPH) change their guidelines as such| then so be it... but for right now| they're still recommending that unvaccinated persons be masked indoors| especially when they cannot be distanced. |I am having a hard time understanding the 'parents' choice' arguments| because the science is still saying that masks protect the people around the wearer| and not as much the wearer themselves. So| by giving the parents a choice to send their unvaccinated child (which is ALL of the kids under 12 for now at least) to school without a mask| that's going to make all the students less safe from Covid (and therefore all of the people those students come into contact with). |Shortly after school let out| there was enough data for the CDC to come out and say that outdoor spread is next to nothing| and so the guidelines were updated| right? Why can't we just continue to follow the guidelines and require masks indoors| but drop the outdoor requirement? I am reading that vaccine availability for kids 6-12 is expected some time this fall. So it seems likely that most of these kids will have the opportunity to be vaccinated by the end of 2021. This truly seems alright to me (and to my children). It's not forever- it's just masks indoors for a little while longer. ||Now| onto the quarantine requirements that are also being brought up. I agree that it is incredibly hard| and will get even harder with more and more parents returning to work in person. However| I also understand the reasoning behind them- it's to stop the spread before it becomes a huge outbreak. Here is my real life example: My husband contracted Covid at work| in April- right before we went back to full-time in-person learning (thankfully for us| we were able to isolate him| and my kids and I remained covid-free). Let me tell you| it was absolutely heartbreaking to have to keep my kids home for two weeks- at that time especially. Yet| I still understood why| because the incubation period for covid was so long. We were able to figure out exactly when my husband was exposed to a positive coworker| and it was a full EIGHT DAYS before he finally started exhibiting symptoms. That's quite a long time for someone to unknowingly be harboring the virus. |There are also studies saying that the Delta variant doesn't have as long of an incubation period. Maybe this will become the new norm| and eventually the quarantine requirement can be reduced...but the science isn't quite there| yet. |Is daily testing something that is even remotely possible? I wish that were something we'd had a chance to explore- it seemed way outside of the realm of possibility last year| but perhaps it's not so far-fetched now (?).||Anyway| I'll stop rambling and just say this: |Before you make a decision about this or anything else covid-related| I trust that:|1) you're remembering that you DO know how to do this safely- you proved that last year; and |2) you're following the science and asking "what's changed?" before making big changes to the plans for in-person learning.||Thank you for your work on the School Board.

Imagine if this was a common opinion: Masks should be outlawed in schools. If you wear a mask you will not be able to enter the school building to receive your education. My child has a medical history of hearing loss and a profound speech and language delay. He needs to see the faces and mouths of his teachers| therapists| and classmates in order to make progress towards his IEP goals. No masks allowed so that my child can receive their ideal educational environment. ||The predictable response would be: Wait...what? Is this lady serious?? There is no way the district is going to tell me that my kid CAN'T wear masks in school! I want a choice for my kids! They will wear a mask if I want them too or if I think that they should. Don't tell me how to make decisions regarding a medical intervention on my kid's face! My child deserves an education too!||OK now that I have your attention| I do not want masks outlawed in schools. I am trying to prove a point that it would be just as much of an overstep to FORBIDE masks as it would be to MANDATE masks. All I want is to be able to make a decision that is best for my child. Yes| COVID-19 still exists and is never going away 100%. There is no federal mask mandate in schools| there is no state mask mandate in schools. So| prove that our local situation requires a mask mandate based on local conditions. You cannot. The data shows that we have a record low case rate| hospitalizations| and death along with some of the highest vaccination percentages in the state and country. You can strongly recommend masks| but you cannot mandate. Thank you.|

Hello| I am writing in support of mandated mask wearing at D57 schools| regardless of vaccination status in order to protect children who are too young to access the vaccine. In the middle school/junior high schools| some children may be vaccinated| some may not be| and you would be putting more responsibility on our already overburdened teachers to know who they should be asking to mask vs. who are allowed to be unmasked. Mandated masking in schools will help protect our young and vulnerable children who cannot be vaccinated as well as lessen the potential for quarantines based on exposure. If a child has a peanut allergy| schools elects to eliminate peanut products throughout the school to lower the risk of exposure. If one child is at risk for covid (when truly| all unvaccinated children and adults are at risk)| then all should be masked to protect them.

Dear Board Members and Superintendent||First of all| thank you for all your hard work. This pandemic has put everyone in between rocks and hard places| but school boards in particular have had to make unimaginably difficult decisions. ||I was so pleased with the way the district was cautious about reopening and provided options for families that weren't comfortable with returning in person. Last year was no one's favorite school year but my daughter made amazing progress in 1st grade| especially once she was able to return to school in person. We were nervous about sending her but were reassured that the district's plans followed the science and took reasonable precautions to allow children to return as safely as possible. ||I'm writing to you today because I recently heard that there was an organized effort from some parents to discourage the district from requiring masks for students and staff who are not vaccinated. ||I worry that you'll only hear from parents upset that their children will need to be masked if the district continues following the science; the majority of parents are too busy working| parenting| and enjoying the summer| unaware of this anti-mask movement. ||Please continue to follow the science and the advice of the IDPH. The new variants are apparently even more contagious than the original. I really struggle to understand why some people are so opposed to face masks; my 1st grader had no issues wearing her mask all day last spring| and was thrilled to be able to attend school in person and make new friends.||Please stay the course and we'll make it to the point that all people| including our younger children| are eligible for vaccinations. Then| hopefully| all kids can go to school safely without masks and other precautions. ||Again| thank you for all your work for our schools.

I have three children in D57. I have not heard any communication regarding the upcoming school year. Many other Illinois districts have released information this week stating that face coverings will be optional for 2021-2022. Many are allowing parents to make that personal decision for their children. I urge our school board members to let this be a family decision based on individual circumstances. At this point| we are conducting every aspect of our lives without face coverings. They are nothing more than a personal decision. Schools should not be the one public place that infringes on that freedom. Face coverings cause anxiety and discomfort in the vast majority of children. In most cases the discomfort leads to the masks being worn below the nose or on the chin. At that point we must collectively admit that they serve no purpose other than for optics. The return to school should be a time filled with joy and excitement. If face coverings become synonymous with schools| then a very negative correlation will develop within the children| parents and community as a whole. I don't want to look to neighboring districts with envy of their freedoms and choices. I respect everyone's choice to either wear or not wear face coverings in public. All that we are asking is to be given that same respect and choice for our children.

We are forwarding three articles for your consideration: ||The first link/article from the New York Times is about how the virus accumulates in a classroom. You need to scroll down to get all the information since it is a 3D simulation.||The second link is to an article from New Zealand about the delta variant being more contagious. ||The third article from Forbes magazine has additional information about delta being extremely contagious and concerns about loosening restrictions.. ||We are hoping that board members will consider this information and advocate for the following safety mitigations:| Keep concurrent option for all grades and all families who made a commitment to concurrent| Keep all grades in cohorts. This increases safety for all students. There is asymptomatic spread and break through cases even in people who are vaccinated.| Keep masks for all grades since virus accumulates and stays in the air for 20 minutes. Even 6th graders could be exposed if 7th and 8th graders are not wearing masks in the hallways| bathrooms| library| gym| lunch room| music room| PLTW room| and art room. Some 7th and 8th graders and their families could also be at higher risk.||Hoping you have an opportunity to read the entire letter that the Remote Advocacy Group sent to BOE members. It details even more reasons why keeping these safety mitigations in place makes sense. ||Thank you for considering this information|||https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/02/26/science/reopen-schools-safety-ventilation.html ||https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/world/2021/07/viral-load-of-delta-variant-1000-times-higher-than-original-strain-of-covid-19-study.html||https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamhaseltine/2021/07/13/the-delta-dilemma-loosening-covid-19-controls-at-a-time-of-increased-danger/?sh=13555c322750|||Viral load of Delta variant 1000 times higher than original strain of COVID-19 - study|| | ||The Delta Dilemma: Loosening Covid-19 Controls At A Time Of Increased Danger|| | |||

I have 2 children attending D57 schools. As you determine how you will apply the latest CDC guidance within our school district| I am emailing to ask the board and the superintendent to make masks optional for students and staff and I'm asking you to respect their choices. This was the recommendation of school superintendent Lisa Taylor. She said| "We're looking forward to having as normal a school year as possible| ... and we will continue to prioritize students and staff safety and health"| Taylor said| noting she appreciates that this updated guidance offers districts more flexibility and local control. Taylor said the schools will continue their clean and disinfecting practices and have hand sanitizer available." As other school districts in Illinois choose to let their teachers and student families determine mask wearing| I am asking you to be flexible and allow your students and staff to make their own mask choices| as district 57 attempts to resume classes with as much normalcy as possible.||Teachers will be struggling to close the learning gaps caused by the last 15+ months of remote learning. Students will be attempting to catch up academically and socially as they return to school. They truly require and deserve an opportunity to learn unmasked and have their speech be unmasked. Students should be reading| writing| and speaking in class| as usual and not in the restrictive manner they endured last year. They need every opportunity to interact with their teachers and peers in an unmasked manner| which allows continued learning of facial cues| a chance to smile and be smiled at| and a chance to lift the psychological and physical weight that masking has placed upon them. I am asking you to consider the whole student in your decision making| when determining how you will apply the new guidelines. Mask mandates are over and I am hoping you will bring that reality to the social| emotional| and academic well being of your students and staff| as you choose the atmosphere and rules you will place upon your school buildings| and those who enter.||I am asking for our d57 board and superintendent to be leaders in your decision making. Last Fall| I was teaching full day in person at a local public school by September| while my children were stuck at home learning remotely| because you chose to be followers and not lead by example and bring students back into their classrooms. |I hope you will not take that slow route with the important decision of making masks optional for students and teachers| regardless of vaccination status. I also hope you will respect the important personal choices of your d57 families and teachers. Please consider the whole student and the whole teacher when you make these impactful decisions.

Dear Representatives of our School District 57||I am a parent of 2 kids in the district| 4rd grader in Lions Park and 7th Grader in Lincoln and I have few concerns I would like to address with the board. ||1. Ability for all Lincoln students to use their lockers again this year.|Their backpacks are over 45lbs in my son's case with required books and Chromebooks| in many cases as it is for my family| it also includes brining in a heavy instrument 2-3 times a week. Finally during winter months heavy coats and outdoor gear. I would like the policy about lockers to be revisited by the administration. The email from Principal Suminski in June suggested that only 6th graders will have access to lockers. My question is what about 7th and 8th grade? 6th graders from last year missed out on this opportunity already and should be able to this year. 7th and 8th Graders are 12 years old meaning they are eligible for vaccination this should make ability to use lockers a straightforward option like it is in many surrounding districts. ||2. It is time that mask mandate should be optional this Fall. Districts around us keep making masks optional for all grade levels. (I can provide you with most updated list as the decisions are being announced daily at this point) People use science to mandate masks| but forget about reviewing the science that addresses the emotional and physical health concerns in kids wearing masks for 7-8 hours at time. |The CDC guidance says that the most important thing we can do as a nation is to make sure that every child in United States is in school in-person every day. School is important for education| social and emotional development| and allows parents to go to work so we can stabilize the economy. CDC gives leeway to local communities and what it says is that for Middle Schools and High Schools where vaccine is available or for younger students where local community has a high levels of vaccination you might not need to require that students need to wear masks. If it was a requirement this would be decided and enforced on national or state level. |As a district we need to have clear criteria and matrix on mask mandates. So it is easy to bring it back if necessary and on contrary to finally give some normalcy to our kids. |