

Speaker Comments
Special Meeting Convening as HR/CIGR COW
January 26, 2021

Name	Affiliation	Topic	Comments
	Student		No Comments
Rachel Crawford	Parent	Reopening Plan	<p>Dear Board Members, Thank you for reading this email. My name is Rachel Crawford, parent of Jacob Crawford, who goes to School of the Arts in grade 9.</p> <p>I would like you to reconsider the reopening plan. While parents such as myself had hoped that there would be a safe hybrid option by this point, I no longer feel that that is the case. As of now, the number of cases has risen and fallen dramatically, a new, more contagious strain has been detected, and the school has offered no concrete plan for child/teacher safety.</p> <p>I called School of the Arts ten days ago and have not received a callback. My friends who teach are experiencing burnout and the ones who haven't already quit are making secondary plans because of how the Rochester City School District has failed them and made their safety a secondary concern.</p> <p>My son will not be partaking in the hybrid option.</p> <p>Please respond to parents' and teachers' concerns promptly. The lack of communication is beyond negligent and a huge disservice to the community that has tried to be patient and adaptable.</p> <p>Thank you again for reading.</p> <p>My contact information is: Rachel Crawford</p>
Pablo Sierra	Parent	Hybrid Model	<p>I would like to submit the following written comment for the board's review:</p> <p>First, I would like the RCSD Board to know that as a parent of two young children in the district, I am 100% in support of re-opening our schools under a hybrid model. Having two days a week of in-person instruction will help my 1st and 3rd grader immensely.</p>

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Denise E. Doris	Parent	Reopening Plan	<p>Good evening RCSd board members, students, staff and community members. My name is Denise Doris. I have two children who attend World of Inquiry school 58. Last night I sat in on the reopening meeting (Hybrid) at the elementary level. Since September my children have received 4 full days of remote instruction each week and one</p>

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Lisa Kester	Community	Reopening Plan	<p>Covid is getting closer and closer to home.</p> <p>My aunt, cousin and pastor's wife now have it. I have a husband who has a compromised immune system and a three year old granddaughter. Is it really imperative that we go back to school before everyone has been given the option to get vaccinated? Please rethink opening schools. I really believe Covid will spread like wildfire and many people will get very ill-not just staff and kids,but their families as well. We have been doing very well at remote learning. In fact, I would say better as far as the upper grades are concerned. There are no more behavior issues, with slight exceptions and classes go smoothly. Again, I ask that you reconsider.</p>
Deborah Hanmer	Community	Reopening Plan	<p>January 25, 2021 Dear Board of Education, Silence is violence. I heard that phrase so many times this summer in protests around our nation that were apparently opening the eyes of people to systems and policies that are unjust and inequitable. But here we are again in Rochester looking at our largest public system—the school system and the silence is deafening. The brick and mortar buildings of RCSD have just slowly begun to open under Superintendent Lesli Myers-Small’s reopening plan that was approved by our elected Board of Education. Our neighbors in the suburbs have been in</p>

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			Deborah Hanmer Initiative Director, Greater Rochester Parent Leadership Training Institute
Victoria Bolton	Community	Reopening Plan	Dear Superintendent, Chiefs and Board, If it is not safe for the Board to meet in person, then it is not safe for classes in school to meet in person. This is simple, clear, and logical. Please listen to the teachers who are in the buildings. Even better, come and shadow a teacher for a day. You would certainly gain information and knowledge from walking in our shoes. Please let us be vaccinated before returning to in-person classes. 70% of parents, and 89% of teachers, do not have confidence in the District's readiness for in-person instruction, the District still plans impose on our students and their educators a plan that is not ready for primetime. Please, please reconsider, for the health and safety of our students and teachers. Thank you, Victoria Bolton, M.S.Ed.
Luva Alvarez	Community	Reopening Plan	Dear Dr.Meyers-Small & School Board Commissioners When the pandemic hit our country a year ago, no one knew the impact it would have on our lives. It has changed the trajectory of how we have been doing so many things. For one, it has affected the daily function of our educational system. Our children went from in-person to online learning in a matter of weeks when the pandemic hit our nation. It was a difficult time for many families as they figured out how they would manage this new norm. Parents began to use their networks and creativity to ensure that their children were learning, but many realized it was just not the same and much was lost. Along the way, parents wondered if their children would ever be in a school building again. Last year, surrounding school districts in Monroe County decided to take the risk, do the hard work, and open school buildings. The exception was the Rochester City School District. Other area school districts provided options for families to consider. What would be in the best interest of their child? Hybrid learning? Remote? In Person? Home schooling? Of course, many asked if it was really safe to return to school. No one really knew the answer, but they were willing to work to make it succeed. A lot was being asked of families in trusting school officials to keep our children safe. What was liberating for most families was that they had choices. They could choose whether or not to send their child back into school buildings. As we all have seen, schools opening with safety measures in place has been deemed safe for the most part. Although we are still wary, children and school

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			585-469-2521 (voice/text) www.greaterrochesterplti.org Preparing Parents To Lead
Karen Bailey	Community	Reopening of Schools	To Board of Education; At the current time it is critical that our students and teachers remain at their homes for remote teaching until every teacher and staff member receives a vaccine. As a past and retired member of the district the rcsd schools has always been excellent in making sure that students have the proper technology needed to learn at home so I do not question any issues pertaining to Home learning. What I do question is allowing teachers and students back to school without a vaccine. It would be heartless and cruel to even act on such a dangerous situation. The Chicago City schools recently decided to keep everyone home because they clearly knew that "some students and teachers could spread the virus and possibly die in the process . Pull out all the stops with your technology and give the teachers administrators and students everything they need. Allow the teachers staff and administrators to also take time out of their school day to get the vaccines as well. The sooner you head down a responsible and reasonable path of reopening, schools will open soon enough with enthusiastic and eager kids ready for success Good luck to you all during this difficult time and please stay safe as we begin our road toward controlling the pandemic and getting back to business . Respectfully, Karen Bailey Retired Educator RCSD Statement on re opening schools
Steve Polo	Staff	Return to School	Dear RCSD BOE, I am writing you to reconsider the proposal that is in place for students to return to school. The proposal is reckless and endangers al that are involved in the return.

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Ben Harper	Staff	Reopening of Schools	<p>Benjamin Harper: HS Teacher . Statement to the Board</p> <p>I'm concerned for the students. I'm concerned for those with underlying conditions. The government handled the covid pandemic haphazardly, that doesn't mean we have to follow suit. We service a community that is under served with vaccines and more susceptible to have a serious reaction to the covid(having more underlying conditions than other groups). We also serve a community that is very hesitant to take a vaccine due to governments unfair dealing with them in the past. What is this anxiousness to get back in the building when a safety plan is not fully laid out and clear. I would begin to give examples, but where would I begin and where would I end. The safety measures are not fully detailed. Please don't let length of time out of the building be the deciding factor to return. There are more pressing reasons to consider. Consider whether the infection rate is increasing or decreasing in Rochester. There is an average of 318 new cases a day in Rocheseter. 4.9% increase weekly. Etc. The stats are easily accessible. All point to the fact that we should exercise greater caution as the vaccine is not readily available to the community we serve.</p> <p>Thank you, Ben Harper</p>

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Cari Mezzoprete	Staff	Reopening of Schools	<p>Board Members:</p> <p>I believe my students belong back at school and that they should have hybrid options like their suburban counterparts, but I believe they should also have options like their counterparts. I am very concerned about the instructional quality of the District’s plan to simultaneously teach remote and hybrid students together in the same classroom. As Commissioner Maloy stated, “this is not a solid instructional model...and it’s not going particularly well in the districts employing it (particularly for remote students...and 70% of RCSD families opted to stay remote).” With that said, I question why the District is moving forward with our less than adequate hybrid learning plan? Our students deserve better!</p> <p>Here are my concerns/questions:</p> <p>*Remote students will have less interaction with their teacher. For example, classroom teachers will be requesting remote students to work asynchronously more while working in small groups with hybrid students. The District has stated a minimum of 1 hour for ELA and 1 hour for Math is the minimum required. This is a reduction of about 2 to 2 1/2 hours of interaction all students have with me now. Also, special teachers will be recording instructional videos for remote students and providing in-person instruction to hybrid students. How is this equitable?</p> <p>*At this point, our hybrid students will not have access to District programs such as, SuccessMaker and Zearn on Mondays and Tuesdays. SuccessMaker is the District’s primary intervention for our lowest students. Both programs help students learn at their own pace and closes skill gaps. Lastly, even if we get some chromebooks, and they are rotated among students, how is that safe? Not to mention, there is only so much flexibility in the schedule without having hybrid students miss other instruction. How is this equitable?</p> <p>*Technology helps students learn. It supports both teaching and learning by expanding experiences and learning materials and increasing student engagement and motivation. Considering our hybrid students will not have access to the technology all day on Mondays and Tuesdays, they will not be able to engage with Google Classroom, Digital assignments, Kahoot, Flipgrid, Thinglink, Google Drawing etc. This is what engages our students in the 21st century. How is this equitable?</p>
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Cathy Cebul-Yansen	Staff	Reopening of Schools	<p>Good evening,</p> <p>I am very concerned about the current reopening plan for RCSD. My main concern lies in the instructional plan for our students. Simultaneous instruction will decrease the effectiveness of instruction for all students, but particularly the majority of students who have chosen to remain remote. Instead of simultaneous instruction, having separate groups for direct in person instruction and direct remote instruction would greatly benefit our students as it would provide students and families who want in person instruction with that opportunity without negatively affecting the level of instruction for either group. It would also ensure that students who are in person have classmates with whom they can collaborate and socialize (at a safe distance, of course). There are many classrooms in my school with fewer than 4 students who have elected to return to school. My classroom has only 1. The vast majority of students and families in our district have chosen to remain remote, so why are they the ones who will suffer the most with less effective instruction?</p>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the district propose to hire enough substitute teachers to cover teacher medical accommodation leaves (that they're being forced to use sick days to take) when there is already a sub shortage in the county? • How will these subs be paid for? • How will these subs be adequately trained on the technology, when the reopening is 8 school days away, when teachers who have been using it since September are just getting comfortable with it? • How will the district guarantee that these subs will stay in these positions rather than be pulled to cover other classroom absences that will inevitably occur due to quarantines and sickness? • Would it not be a more effective and cost efficient plan to allow students to bring their Chromebooks to school so they can simply Zoom with their teachers who are high risk and need to stay working remotely rather than pay for these subs? • Why are medical accommodations not being provided equally to teachers for the same condition that qualifies them as high risk? (Why are some being allowed to work fully remote, while others are being charged their sick days to take partial medical leaves)? • How can we trust that parents are temperature checking their children each day? If a child is sent to school with obvious COVID like symptoms (at the start of the day, they're getting off the bus, visibly sick) on multiple occasions, will there be consequences for families (i.e. will they be removed from the hybrid program and asked to do all remote learning)? • When/how will teachers have the time to plan for the increased demand of teaching simultaneously? Lunch is being cut by half, as well as time on Wednesdays.
Courtney Bernier	Staff	Opening Hybrid	<p>There are many reasons I am uneasy to return to in person school due to the lack of many unanswered questions but the main one is the lack of concern for the remote students. I have gone over our school list for in person students and was blown away by the class sizes. I am a PE teacher in a high school setting where I have up to 36 students in most of all of my classes. I will have only 3 students in most of my classes in person out of those 36 students. So, the majority of my students will have to log into class online. How is this truly looking out for the majority of students and parents wishes? The students at home will not have the proper PE equipment at home to fully participate with our low numbers of in person students. My co workers and I have had such success with students logging in and completed workouts with us since March, why change something that has been working just for the last couple months of school for such a small percentage. If this was really about the students and the parents wishes, then we would remain home. I hope you can see our parents concerns for our students safety is not a joke and by you ignoring their concerns is speaking volumes to them that you truly do NOT care.</p>

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Tia Iodato	Staff	Reopening Plan	<p>I am writing to express concerns regarding the reopening of our city schools. I am concerned for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -preparedness and how phase 1 is going (teachers aka people actually in the buildings not just people from above have shared the ill preparedness and feelings of not feeling safe) - the lack of understanding some people have around the virus and seriousness of it (I have been apart of many meetings with jumbled misinformation, complaints of masks wearing, comments of not fighting the kids to wear them, and talk of a "dead virus" amongst other misinformed false medical talk from non professionals) - our demographic is hard we had fights where teachers were forced to get involved and be in close physical contact, students who spit, and students who do not stay in class and tired teachers who let them wonder the halls making it very hard to keep social distancing (the district is making this sound way easier than it is because other schools are doing it but it is not fair or accurate to compare our district to other suburban districts with more resources and less behavioral problems) - size of offices where these children are sent and often congregate than being reprimanded by admin (respectively) for not letting them in or "doing our job" when we need social distancing in our offices -lastly yes spread "isn't happening in schools" but that's because we're not in school - us teachers are finally having a grasp on virtual learning why keep giving these children more change in the middle of the year especially when the numbers are there - the majority of parents reported not trusting the reopening plan along with the teachers who are there everyday in the open putting in the work. <p>Thank you for your consideration and time in reading this email. Sincerely, A committed and very worried rcsd teacher</p>
Joe Giuliano	Staff	In person Instruction	<p>Thank you for taking the time to read my email. I truly appreciate all of your efforts during this challenging time.</p> <p>I am reaching out with regard to the District's readiness for in-person instruction. My concern is simple, yet speaks volumes.</p> <p>After returning to my building at the end of MAY to retrieve items from my office (at the instruction of school leaders), I noticed my hallway trash can had not been emptied since we left school in MARCH.</p>

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Sandra M Krieger	Staff	Reopening of Schools	<p>I do not wish to speak at tomorrow night’s board meeting but I would like to share my thoughts on the districts reopening plan, as well as an email one of my students wrote to Dr. Myers-Small earlier in the month. I have been with the district for the past 15 years and love working with my students very much. This year has been far from ideal due to circumstances that are out of the students and staffs control but we have figured out how to make the most of it and for that I am thankful and proud. We have finally gotten into a rhythm when it comes to teaching remotely. Students are making the most of it and research shows that children of all ages thrive best with CONSISTENCY. This push from Dr. Myers-Small to change what has been working for the last 2 marking periods is the exact opposite of the consistency our students need and require to be successful. It will take weeks, if not months, for teachers and staff to adjust to this hybrid system, just like it took weeks and months for us to adjust to remote learning at the beginning of the school year, thus interrupting our educational process and setting our students education back even further than we already are.</p> <p>My second major concern is with the new schedule starting on February 8th. I cannot find any research, and I have done a lot, that condones or even advocates for remote education to take up 6-6.5 hours of a student’s day. There is NOTHING healthy about staring at a computer screen for that amount of time. There are many age specific time recommendations for online learning and this new schedule does not take any of them into consideration. The negative health risks associated with prolonged screen time are not worth the perceived educational reward of more seat time. Some of those health risks include the dangers of blue light exposure as well as a sedentary lifestyle. Our students do not have access to blue light glasses which are said to protect your eyes from glare and can help reduce potential damage to your retina from prolonged blue light exposure. Blue light has also been known to cause eye strain, headaches and disruptions to sleep cycles, so the negative effects that all of this computer time is going to have on their vision and their overall health many not be known for years to come. Another health concern I have involves that fact that they are already far too sedentary throughout the day with the schedule we have now, so extending class times, shortening their breaks between classes and taking</p>

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			<p>their lunch down to 30 minutes is far from healthy. In a regular non-pandemic situation classrooms have movement and interaction and students aren't forced to sit all day like they have to when they have are learning through the computer. It is irresponsible of us as educators to put our students in this type of situation without knowing the long term effects all of this could have on their overall health. I feel very strongly that lengthen our current bell schedule is not in the best interest of our students. Our student need those eye and brain breaks so that they can make the most of the 30 minutes they have with each of their teachers. By changing the current schedule, I fear that the students level of engagement in classes is going to decline severely, especially those classes in the latter half of the day. It is incredibly hard for adults to sit on Zoom all day and be in meeting after meeting so I can only imagine how our students must feel. From a health standpoint this hybrid learning model of simultaneous instruction does not make any sense.</p> <p>I have spoken to my students daily about their feelings on all of this and most of them are not happy about the decisions that are being made on their behalf and for good reasons too. Many of them have expressed that they already feel like so much of life is out of their control during this pandemic and now this is just one more thing that they feel they have no voice and no control over. A few of my students have already written letters to Dr. Myers-Small letting her know their feelings on this situation (they received no response). I think that it is important for us as adults to not only teach our students that they have a right to voice their opinions but that their opinions matter, are heard and can make a difference. During this unprecedented time, I think the adults whom are in a decision making capacity need to start putting themselves in our children's shoes and maybe then they will see why this reopening plan is most certainly not in the best interest of our very amazing, bright young scholars.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.</p> <p>Sincerely, Sandra M Krieger Health Educator Leadership Academy for Young Men</p>
Kimberly Levitt	Staff	Reopening of Schools	<p>Dear RCSD Board Members, I am a teacher at one of the schools that has returned for Phase 1 re-opening. I have many concerns about Phase 2 because of the experiences I have had since returning January 4th.</p>

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			<p>1) Simultaneous specials instruction. Students are finding it difficult to remain engaged when the in-person students complete their work. Because our lessons should be tailored to the students learning at home, that severely limits what we can create in person to drawing. It takes longer for students working in the classroom to complete their assignments. As a push in teacher, I would like to hook up my own personal laptop to the Smartboard to project for both the remote learners and the in person learners. All of my lesson tabs are already set up and ready to go. It takes time away from all student learning if I have to disinfect the workstation, log in, find and pull up my lessons, and then begin teaching the class. So far, and I'm working with IT, we have not figured out a way to make this work.</p> <p>2) Mask wearing. Students in our special ed. population do not keep their masks on. We were told at our phase 1 reopening meetings that if a student could not correctly wear a mask, then they would be asked to learn remotely. So far there is no follow through with this. Our building had a number of COVID cases from one student not correctly masking.</p> <p>3) Response time. When I was out on a Friday because I was experiencing some of the possible covid symptoms, I emailed benefits to see where I could go to get a test. I got no response at all. Not even a auto-generated response of district testing sites. I was told that benefits was working remotely on the voice message, and that for the quickest response, I should email benefits@rcsdk12.org. If they are overwhelmed with Phase 1, what will happen when everyone K-6 returns for Phase 2? This is unacceptable.</p> <p>4) As an itinerant teacher, I will be travelling between buildings during the school day. I will teach 7 different class periods, but a total of 10 classrooms of students. I am being told that per the IEP's of special education students, that they will still need to combine with gen ed classes for special subjects. I know the returning numbers are low, so combining classes doesn't make large groups, but that is a lot of contacts in a single day. I'm not suggesting a schedule change, but I'm thinking about the safety of my family.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and I hope that you take these things into consideration before heading into phase 2.</p> <p>Kimberly Levitt Art teacher School #4, School #2</p>
Lisa Tilley	Staff	Reopening of Schools	<p>As a Special Subject teacher, U implore you to rethink opening our schools. Just by going in Mondays and Tuesdays, I would be exposed to over 60 students each week. If I catch Covid in one class, I would spread it throughout the school as I push into each class. My first vaccine shot will be in mid-March. I would be happy to return once vaccinated. We all would!!!</p> <p>Lisa Tilley Librarian</p>

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Ms. Farrell	Staff	Reopening of Schools	<p>I am a 5th grade teacher in the RCSD. I fear for my family with this reopening. Both my wife and son have higher risk of respiratory infections and it scares me that by reporting to the building I may bring covid home to them.</p> <p>The country is losing 4,000 people a day. Many of these people are in the same demographic as my students. I fear for them. I fear for their health. I fear for their lives.</p> <p>At least once a week I get an email telling me that someone that works in my building has a confirmed case of covid. How can we consider going back when so many people continue to be infected? How can we consider rising the lives of all the people that work in the buildings? How can we consider risking the lives of our students?</p> <p>Let me close by saying that it is not lost on me that this board meeting is being held remotely for your safety.</p>
Grace Muir, Elementary Special Education Teacher and Gianna Filiaci, Secondary Special Education Teacher	Staff	Phase 2 Reopening	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>As the date of phase 2 approaches, we are writing to express a few concerns regarding the reopening of schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date, my Kindergarten 12:1:1 classroom has not been assigned a teacher's assistant. This is mandated based on the needed ratio of special education students to teachers, and to assist with the toileting procedure for those students who are not toilet trained. • There is inconsistency in the availability and roll out of mifi hotspots and Covid-related cleaning supplies. To date, I have a student who I have not yet met due to there not being enough mifi within the district. • Many teachers have yet to book a vaccine appointment. Since there is a stronger strain of Covid surfacing, infection rates are going above 10%. Therefore, we don't understand the district's logic in going to a hybrid model at this point in the year with so many of us - students, staff and their at-risk/compromised family members - being put at risk. <p>We miss having a face to face connection with students dearly, and know that our demographic is already at-risk. Our students are just getting used to the current rituals and routines, and with cases rising we worry that the benefits of returning to schools may not outweigh the dangers at this point in the school year.</p> <p>Sincerest regards,</p>

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			Grace Muir, Elementary Special Education Teacher Gianna Filiaci, Secondary Special Education Teacher
Craig McManus	Staff	Hybrid Return Plan	<p>. Schools have compiled lists of returning students based on student responses in PowerSchool, without first attaining confirmation of parental consent for a student's return.</p> <p>2. Student hybrid returns have been determined on a "first come, first served" basis, rather than prioritizing students needs.</p> <p>3. No explanation has been given of how or why a random selection of 25% of the student population will benefit from hybrid learning.</p> <p>4. Prohibitions and/or restrictions (including the use of Chromebooks) have been placed on hybrid learners that will inhibit their learning and disadvantage them.</p> <p>5. The vast majority of students who will remain remote and have acclimatized to remote learning will now be at a disadvantage through teachers' divided attention between hybrid learners and remote learners.</p> <p>The definition of "Safe Schools":</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow only a small fraction of the student population to return for instruction for just days a week. 2. Mandate the wearing of PPE by all personnel at all times. 3. Maintain social distancing in all areas and all situations. 4. Prohibit/restrict the use of instructional tools and equipment. 5. Disinfect all surfaces and equipment after each use. 6. "Deep" clean every Wednesday. 7. Crack open windows to ensure proper ventilation. 8. Test for covid-19 infections regularly.
John O'Neil	Staff	Hybrid Instruction	<p>Good afternoon,</p> <p>As a 24 year veteran Rochester City School District teacher I have had occasion to question, at times defend, and other times shake my head in disbelief at various policies that the District has adopted.</p>

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			<p>When the District decided to go 100% remote for September while other districts around us were implementing hybrid instructional models, I questioned it at first but after having prepared for the possibility throughout the spring pandemic closure, I was able to get ready and find tools I was and am comfortable with, and was able to get to work. I do believe it was and actually still is the best option for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year.</p> <p>As educators, we often worry about excessive transitions for our students. While it is not what most educators in the District desire, we do have remote instructional rituals and routines in place and I and most teachers I support have become more or less comfortable with the tools we are using for remote instruction. To reopen buildings to students only to have them return to remote instruction because numbers increase regionally or individual school buildings have to go remote due to localized outbreaks just adds more needless transitions to a year fraught with uncertainty.</p> <p>When I was called back for Phase I because one of the students on my rosters was "returning" - she wasn't but that's a different story, I went in without question. I worked with the group I have worked with since September even as both of my students in the group remained remote. Three students out of 12 returned. The students and the core teacher and myself wear masks. Appropriate spacing is achievable. It has worked out pretty well. Phase II doesn't really impact me other than changing my class times. Phase III impacts me in that I may have two students returning to my general education ENL co-taught groups.</p> <p>It is often said that schools are the safest places for students to be. What I know from a long-ish teaching career is that students are sent to school sick or come from homes where others may be sick. Simple science would say that as more possible carriers are concentrated in a space, the likelihood of viral spread increases, even if everyone follows procedures to the letter.</p> <p>I am not thinking of myself. I consider my exposure risk to limited as the vast majority, over 90%, of my students are staying remote. I am thinking of other teachers, administrators, and students who may be in fuller classrooms than mine. I have gotten eleven emails since the beginning of the school year stating that a faculty or staff member in my school has tested positive for COVID. This is during the remote instruction period. I would hate to see those emails increase.</p>
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			<p>The school year is half over. It is likely that NYSED will get the testing and accountability waivers it is requesting from the US Department of Education. Vaccine is being distributed slowly but surely and new COVID variants are running rampant.</p> <p>For many, certainly the parents and their students who have chosen to stay remote for the remainder of the year, schools are not closed, they're just remote.</p> <p>I'm looking forward to when we can bring everyone, not just a small percentage, back together when vaccination numbers are higher and it's safe for everyone.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p> <p>John O'Neil ENL Teacher Edison Campus</p>
Danielle Wingo	Staff	Reopening Plan	<p>Dear Board of Education Members,</p> <p>As many of my colleagues and I have expressed in union meetings, in staff meetings, and in correspondence with top school officials, we have serious concerns about the reopening plan and lack of answers to our questions from the Central Office powers that be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If proper planning began back in April 2020 we could have reopened schools safely when the positivity rate was minimal. ➤ Phase 1 of reopening occurred in the height of the pandemic, exposing students and staff unnecessarily to more people outside of their familial bubble. ➤ https://commonwealthmagazine.org/education/in-person-learning-now-considered-high-risk-by-cdc/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The above link is to an article that in-person learning is in fact HIGH RISK ➤ Procedures for temperature checks, non-mask compliance, social distancing non-compliance, and when a COVID case happens at school have yet to be shared with us. Why is this a secret? <p>These are just the highlights. I want it to be known that contrary to public opinion, we do want to be back in school with our students but not at the expense of their health and safety (or ours) and the disruption of an educational routine that has been established and in which many students are thriving. No matter if we are in school or remain virtual, there will always be students that struggle. I am concerned for those students who are choosing to stay home and will “get the shaft” because their teachers have to teach simultaneously to them and</p>

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			<p>their hybrid classmates. I know for a fact after speaking to many suburban teachers that their remote learners do not get the attention they once had. They receive only asynchronous work and have no real-time interactions with their teachers. Our district has only about 25% of families choosing hybrid. Doesn't seem fair to the 75%, that for the safety of themselves and their families, have chosen to remain at home to learn. Thank you for the attention you have given this message.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted, Danielle Wingo</p>
Andrew McClain	Staff	Feelings of a new teacher	<p>I teach math for middle school at Nathaniel Rochester. I want to go back to school to see and teach my kids, when it is safe and appropriate to do so. We have seen through this pandemic the serious consequences of implementing what we want too soon. To move forward too hastily and without proper attention to detail, which is clearly lacking here, could have dire consequences, and for what, a plan that has yet to show any clear effectiveness over our current remote model? If we had clear answers as to why we need to move ahead so recklessly, then maybe I could be persuaded, but there are no answers. And I am tired of being lied to and told half truths. These are my feelings as a teacher who really has my students best interests at heart.</p>
Mikayla Ekwel	Staff	Reopening of Schools	<p>To the Board and leaders of Rochester City School District,</p> <p>Due to COVID regulations that you have previously pointed out regarding in person meetings, I felt it best to express my feelings through email as opposed to attending the meeting this evening. I intend to make my point of view short, sweet, and to the point. I find it fascinating that as board members you have stated on multiple occasions that it is not safe for meetings to occur in person even with 6 foot standards in place, yet you find no error or problem with sending hundreds of teachers and children back into buildings that are not properly ventilated, cleaned, or prepared for in person learning. I know full well you claim this is not the case, that all necessary measures are being taken to ensure our buildings are the proper learning environment for kids, however the staff members who have been forced to go back already beg to differ.</p> <p>I find it fascinating that you feel it is appropriate to send us back to school in person, but are taking away transportation options for children that live more than 1.5 miles outside of their school zone knowing full well how many of our parents struggle with no transportation options, and no financial options outside of that to provide their child a way to school. I find it utterly fascinating but sadly not surprising that even after hundreds of teachers, staff, parents, and community members have poured out their deep seated concerns and fears to you all</p>

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			<p>regarding returning to the buildings in person, you still feel we need to “suck it up” and go back anyways because “children belong in school”. However by this point I suppose we should be used to your completely callous, cold, unfeeling nature towards those who truly keep this district alive shouldn’t we?</p> <p>We have no business going back to buildings. It is NOT safe for our kids, one of the most vulnerable populations of children in all of Rochester, and it is NOT safe for us, the troops on the ground in this battle. I stand by my thought that if you continue to pursue and force this back to in person learning plan right now, you are 100% okay with student and staff illness/death being on your hands. You are clearly okay with staff being terrified for their lives, and their families suffering as well should COVID be brought into their homes as a result of student and staff contact. You are also clearly okay with sending children back into a learning environment that will NOT benefit them. One that will be completely ill equipped to deal with the monumental learning needs put onto us after months of learning loss, lack of mental and emotional care, and being out of in school routines and procedures.</p> <p>Should you pursue this in person learning model, you will forever make it clear to us how little care you feel for the people who keep RCSD running and functioning, and how little you care about the children you claim consistently to put first. That we are all easily replaceable, and if lives are lost or irreparably damaged in this process then “it is what it is”. I highly recommend you think deeply and carefully about this decision, unless you are truly okay with RCSD completely falling apart.</p> <p>The fate of our entire district is in your hands, and so I hope whatever decision you make allows you to sleep soundly at night.</p> <p>Regards, Mikayla Ekwel SPED consult grades 2 & 3</p>
Katia Matulic	Staff	Reopening Plan	<p>I teach math for middle school at Nathaniel Rochester. I want to go back to school to see and teach my kids, when it is safe and appropriate to do so. We have seen through this pandemic the serious consequences of implementing what we want too soon. To move forward too hastily and without proper attention to detail, which is clearly lacking here, could have dire consequences, and for what, a plan that has yet to show any clear effectiveness over our current remote model? If we had clear answers as to why we need to move ahead so recklessly, then maybe I</p>

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			<p>could be persuaded, but there are no answers. And I am tired of being lied to and told half truths. These are my feelings as a teacher who really has my students best interests at heart.</p> <p>Dear Members of the Board of Education,</p> <p>I am writing to you to respectfully request that you not approve the Superintendent's plan to reopen for in-person instruction. We all are eager to get back to school and be reunited with our students but feel that we should wait until such time as we are better prepared to do so; I believe that there are several obstacles to implementing this reopening at this time.</p> <p>Despite the fact that some studies suggest that schools tend to be safe places for students that is predicated on following strict guidelines and safety protocols. As some 70% of parents who have opted to have their children remain learning remotely that is evidence that faith in the ability of the district to adhere to health protocols is astonishingly low. Enforcing mask wearing will likely be a challenge; already there are reports from schools who have opened in Phase I of students not complying with the mask-wearing requirement, and administrators doing nothing to enforce it.</p> <p>As a teacher who has worked in buildings with no running water in the staff bathroom and custodial staff unable or unwilling to perform basic duties such as emptying trash cans or vacuuming, I have little faith that the district is able to meet the demands of adhering to cleanliness requirements in the buildings.</p> <p>The fact that there is a new variant of the coronavirus, one that is more contagious and more likely to affect children, is of grave concern. That coupled with the fact that it will be some time before teachers and others have the opportunity to get vaccinated, is a serious concern. The thought of the loss of even one student, teacher or staff member succumbing to this dreadful virus is unacceptable. The district should wait until those that chose to be vaccinated get both vaccine doses before reopening.</p> <p>We teachers have not been provided with adequate instructional training on how to implement simultaneous instruction. I was in one PD where the presenters did nothing more than show us pictures of classrooms and give us links to websites. Repeated requests for concrete examples of how to actually do simultaneous instruction were ignored. When teachers commented that there are not enough webcams and other devices for all teachers to have one, we were encouraged to purchase our own. In short, we are being asked to teach in a manner in which we are</p>
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			<p>completely untrained and ill-prepared. This is not "best practice." As frustrating as it is for us teachers, sadly, the students will be the ones that suffer.</p> <p>In the early part of the fall, it took a while for some students, parents and caregivers to learn our young scholars' schedules. Fortunately, by now most students are attending Zoom classes regularly and are thoroughly familiar with their daily routines. When we return all students' schedules will be completely changed, which will likely cause a great deal of disruption, this disruption will result in more loss of instructional time. Yet another break in their rituals and routines will further damage their continuity in learning.</p> <p>We all know that our students want and need to be with their peers, as well as benefit from the presence of their caring teachers and other service providers. However, returning to in-person learning during Covid times will be nothing like attending school pre-Covid. Gone will be scholars working in partnership with others or in small groups, sharing materials, resources or toys. Absent, too, will be any close contact and those ever so important fist-bumps, high fives and hugs. Limitations on peer interaction can very well prove to be an unforeseen frustration for students who will not be accustomed to such restrictions.</p> <p>These are some reasons why the district should reexamine its plan to rush in to in-person learning. The district owes it to its students to reopen safely and with teachers well-trained to face the challenges of simultaneous instruction; at this point in time it is not prepared to do so.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and attention.</p> <p>Sincerely, Katia Matulic ESL Teacher School 42</p>
Catherine Wells	Staff	Remote vs. Hybrid learning	<p>Dear Lesli,</p> <p>I wrote to you before about the opening of our schools with much trepidation (now the reopening) and waaaalaaaa.....the next day the schools went fully remote!</p>

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			<p>At this time I would like to share my concerns and thoughts as a long-standing, dedicated, and distinguished educator in the city school district.</p> <p><u>Here's my TOP 10 REASONS to rethink Remote vs. Hybrid:</u></p> <p>One: Where is the survey for educators? Does our voice not matter? We are exposing ourselves as well to the many dangers connected to the virus if and when we are asked to return to work. I felt I had to voice my apprehension and alarm in moving forward with the reopening of schools after the holidays.</p> <p>Two: How do you see this rolling out as a 'smooth transition' for our students and ourselves? To disrupt our way of teaching since September, where everything is coming into place, remote learning is getting better, and there's no to minimal chance of exposure teaching and learning from our homes. This reentry is not good instructional practice. It's an upheaval on many levels. All of which can impact the educational process, left teetering on an imbalance of ambiguity. Also we were told that the only time we could come into our building to prepare our classrooms was on Wednesdays after 3:30. I need at least a full week that runs all day to get my room ready and no....I'm not about to spend my WHOLE Christmas break like I did last year preparing the room. Last year was horrific and I don't wish to ever revisit that scenario again.</p> <p>Three: SAFETY, safety, safety.....Filters? How do we know if they've been installed? No one in their right mind is going to open up windows in the dead of winter. Freezing temperatures blowing into the room causing everyone to get sick?? Where will the students sit on the bus? How will they use the bathroom? How will we? Are sanitizers put into place at stations such as by drinking fountains and hallways. Cafeteria's? Where will they eat? If in our rooms, then where do we eat? Sneeze guards, hand sanitizer, masks, desks, markers on floors, transitioning from one area to another, signs posted.....these critical concerns go on and on.....</p> <p>Four: Consistency is KEY.....Remote, hybrid, remote, hybrid, ½ in class, the other remote, ½ sync, ½ async, Wednesday staff pd's plus remote, plus async, plus.....HELP!!! There are only 6 students out of 23 who opted for hybrid. Attendance is finally good now. That's going to waiver once the reopening begins in the middle of the school year. It's just all too confusing. Chrome books at school, now they are at home and HAVE to stay home....WHAT? The students are expected to work in their chrome books at school as well. Especially continuing with a normal flow of things and doing all of their work online</p>
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			<p>using new and innovative ways to complete assignments. Padlet, jamboard, peardeck, nearpod, flipgrid, kami, teachermade, etc.....again...the list goes on.....what better way to prepare them for college and the workforce!! Also I don't want someone else teaching my students. They already know me! We've bonded remotely, have set routines, and guidelines that have been put into place!! We will have to start all over again in a classroom setting. Pacing, assignments, and established behaviors will go right out the window! IF and when we are to do this it should start at the beginning of a new school year. It would only make of a sound mind and plan to reopen AFTER the vaccine is out and a majority are vaccinated (within 4-5 months- safety in numbers), which aligns perfectly with the end of final quarter of school. What happened to us last Christmas was a travesty and I was directly affected by the downfall! I would hate to see that happen again. We have to be very mindful of our health and well-being. Especially now with all that is going on. People in general are skeptical as it is and full of anxiety.</p> <p>Five: Affordability.....Can the district afford and provide all of these new provisions that should and must be put into place? Filters, masks, sanitizer, dispensers, temperature checks, shields, guards, gloves, stickers for labeling six-feet apart on floors etc..., signs for rules and guidelines, etc...Where will the funding be coming from since we're already in an insurmountable debt!!</p> <p>Six: Liability.....Who's liable if god forbid a child or adult gets sick while working at school? The risk factor goes through the roof the minute we leave our homes and step into a car or bus. Remote learning takes away all of those crucial concerns above along with alleviating anxious feelings. We're saving lives AND money, AND working smart from home!</p> <p>Seven: Timing.....There couldn't be a worse time to reopen schools. It's the dead of winter with freezing temps, more susceptibility to sickness due to it being at the peak of the cold and flu season, so....sneezing, coughing, runny noses....that's the NORM in winter. Every time someone coughs or sneezes....chaos and nervousness will run rampant everywhere!! It's just doesn't make sense. Fevers come with the flu. Everyone and their brother will have to be tested for Covid. Can they afford and have enough kits available? We're already in the orange. AND....who wants that test done to them daily? Nobody!</p> <p>Eight: FAMILY....They are first and foremost! I have family with underlying conditions and a parent who's 92. I have to worry about seeing her or NOT being able see her and family due to exposure at work? Need I say more? I</p>
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			<p>have been able to take care of her and be with my loved ones because I'm working from home. My students have been able to be with their families too.</p> <p>Nine: SAVING lives AND Reducing the deficit.....fuel, sanitizing supplies, school supplies, masks, signs, shields, guards, clothing, heating, filters, etc....and last, but not least...saving lives!! That which we are not spending should be going back into filling the gap, therefore reducing the deficit! Makes sense right? AND there was a 0 budget spent on teacher supplies this year. Is that going to open back up if and when we return? As of right now there are no supplies in the classrooms for students.</p> <p>Ten: Of course saving best for last.....COVID testing because you say have it done before returning? WHY? If we're filling out the health questionnaire daily then there is no need for unnecessary testing! This has to be done every day? I for one am saying no to this forced procedure! It's inhumane and uncalled for. Students aren't required, but we are? We are ALL around germs all day every day. There's no getting around that. Taking precautions and being mindful are daily reminders. Exposure is one thing, symptoms are another. Temperature checks are fine for now. No one wants to wake up in the morning and feel anxious and full of trepidation about going into work and having a stick shoved up their nose!!</p> <p>There's a whole lot more I could elaborate on regarding rethinking this reopening plan, but some thoughts are better left unsaid. With that in mind, it's best to close out this letter with happy thoughts and affirmations. We're all in this together. Let's look out for each other and do what's best for all parties concerned. Social distancing is just that....distancing ourselves socially. This one act performed with fidelity has flattened the curve tremendously. Let's keep our heads up, be mindful, and stay strong!</p> <p>Sincerely, Catherine Wells</p> <p>A Concerned and Caring Educator☺</p>
Kristen Baskewicz	Staff	Reopening Plans	My name is Kristen Baskewicz and I am the music teacher at #34 school. I am unable to speak at tonight's meeting but I wanted to email my comments.

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			<p>I have been in this district for 16 years. I have had six superintendents. I have been at my school for 10 years. I have had four principals. In the time I have been there, School #34 went from a failing school to a school in good standing largely due to our principal Carmine Peluso and then Dave Passero. The district took both away from us. Last year we lost six of our best young classroom teachers. I lead with this so that you know that School #34 is a family and CO has shown repeatedly that school communities do not matter to them. We feel like puzzle pieces that they shuffle around. Our beloved school feels like an incomplete, smashed together puzzle under their leadership.</p> <p>It is no wonder that we do not trust their ability to bring us safely back to school during the peak of a pandemic, but we will do it regardless because we are ALWAYS there for our students. All we are asking is that the district listens to and acts on our concerns. We all know remote learning is not ideal and we all want to be back in school- safely and with a meaningful and effective hybrid model. Simultaneous teaching is not that. All around the county, teachers in all environments- but especially in urban settings- are saying that simultaneous instruction does not work. It takes away much needed attention from both in-person and remote learners and RCSD has not provided the means to make it any different for our schools.</p> <p>When the superintendent told us to "figure it out" and "Google it," that's just what I did. What I found was that the most effective strategy is to plan for remote learners and to teach the in-person students the same way. In K-6 schools this will be impossible because the district will not allow them to have their Chromebooks. The district keeps saying that we have the available tech to make this work but that is just not true. There are not enough Chromeboxes and iPads in every school for all in person learners and even if there were, iPads do not allow for the same features as Chromebooks regardless. In the music room, all I have is my one laptop. That's it. How can I engage both in person and remote students sitting behind a face mask, a face shield, and a laptop?</p> <p>Not to mention, we have been only given three hours of simultaneous instruction PD from the district that at least half of was put together by employees who, while I know they did their best, have not been in a classroom for some time and have little idea of the issues we are facing. During the first PD, not only was it suggested that we buy our own tech for this travesty of a hybrid model, but almost no questions were answered, and our very real concerns about instruction were largely ignored- so much so that we had to start a Twitter campaign! No, instead we are vilified to the media and told to "Google it" from our own leadership. This is not acceptable.</p>
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Speaker Comments
Special Meeting Convening as HR/CIGR COW
January 26, 2021

			<p>I have taken advantage of the many new tech sites the district has paid a lot of money for to plan engaging and meaningful remote music instruction this year- Smart Learning Suite, Pear Deck, Quaver Music, just to name a few. Now only the remote students will have these opportunities while the in-person students will not? How is that a smart use of budget money? How is the equitable? Not to mention that it takes hours to make virtual lessons. Now we are expected to take even more time planning in person alternatives because buildings don't have the adequate tech. And after living through this pandemic for the past 11 months, and not having really any meaningful training, I'm not sure where to start. And our leader tells us to "Google it." I think our students deserve more. This is not quality instruction. Our teachers and students deserve better from this district. They have had nearly a year to come up with a hybrid model and this is the best they can do?</p> <p>They are throwing us in buildings just to say we're there for the optics. They never asked teachers what we think would be best for our classrooms and our students. They aren't even giving us adequate time to get vaccinated. I understand we need to get back to school. We are just asking them to delay until they have a model that will be worth the risk of going back. A model that is fair and equitable, and that is not setting students and teachers up to fail. If they aren't sure how to do that, they can start with asking their very knowledgeable and highly trained work force. Because obviously so far, they just Googled it.</p> <p>Very sincerely,</p> <p>Kristen Baskewicz General/Vocal Music School #34</p>
Sydney Friedrich	Staff	Reopening of Schools	<p>My name is Sydney Friedrich. This is my third year teaching in the Rochester City School District. I have concerns and questions regarding the change in the bell schedule as well as the reopening of schools.</p> <p>The new bell schedule proposes an additional 90 minutes of screen time per day. One of the district's arguments for offering a hybrid option is to reduce screen time, but we are doing the opposite - secondary students will now have six MORE hours of screen time per week under the hybrid model. My main concern with this additional screen time is its impact on MiFi data usage for our scholars. At the moment, students have 10gigs of 4G data, which according to an infographic released by the district in October 2020, will run out after 20 hours of zoom if a</p>

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			<p>student were to keep their camera and microphone on during their classes. This means that we are currently only providing students with enough data to actively engage in four days of classes per month. Although students are still able to access the internet through 3G once the 4G runs out, this creates lag, garbled and delayed speech, frozen screen shares, and makes it all but impossible to meaningfully participate in synchronous Zoom class. Will students receive an increase in their 4G MiFi data now they will have an extra hour and a half of screen time every day? Or will scholars now only have enough data to actively participate in class three days per month? We are encouraging passive learning behavior through the inequity of internet access and prioritizing the quantity of instructional minutes over quality.</p> <p>Furthermore, the bell schedule reduces lunch to 30 minutes. Our scholars that are learning remotely and receive bagged lunches from school buildings will not have enough time to get to the schools to pick up lunch, eat their meal, and return to their afternoon class without being tardy. How can we better support these students?</p> <p>In December, secondary teachers were informed that they would spend the duration of the school year fully remote. I was excited to have consistency, for both me and my students. Rituals and routines are crucial to our scholars. How does it serve the best interests of our students to upend all these rituals and routines as soon as students have gotten used to remote learning? I don't understand why we are adding chaos and confusion to our students during a tumultuous time in history. We will lose precious instructional minutes teaching new rituals and routines for hybrid, prioritizing the needs of the 20% of secondary students who chose hybrid over the 80% who have opted to stay fully remote.</p> <p>In order to minimize screen time, ensure that our scholars have equitable access to meals and internet data, and to avoid further traumatizing our students by forcing more mid-year changes on them, I suggest that we remain remote at the secondary level and continue with our adjusted time schedule that we have been using throughout this school year. Thank you.</p>
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