

rom: N Sloan [REDACTED] >

Subject: Plans now for 2021/2022

Date: February 12, 2021 at 8:52:35 AM CST

To: fabesl@wilmette39.org, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, steenm@wilmette39.org, panzicaf@wilmette39.org, sternwee@wilmette39.org, poehlinga@wilmette39.org, stonee@wilmette39.org, Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Members of the D39 School Board:

Are there tentative plans for District 39 to be fully in person by the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year? Has the Board considered adopting a resolution to have full in person school available for all children in grades K-8 either this spring or by the fall of 2021? I urge you to please make this commitment now. And yes I am mindful of upcoming school board elections and therefore I urge you not to pass the buck. The timetable for successful planning begins now. By the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year District 39 staff should have had the opportunity to obtain the Covid vaccine. I don't suggest that this will be a perfect solution for all stakeholders as children will not likely be vaccinated and questions will remain about risks of transmission. Therefore, I urge you to begin your plans now for full in person school and not wait. You will likely need to review spacing requirements, building capacity, staffing plans and perhaps testing options. Space should not be the rate limiting factor for getting all of our kids back in school. If you need to rent additional building space you should begin looking now. Our family will have one child each at McKenzie Elementary, Highcrest Middle School, Wilmette Junior High and New Trier High School. I can attest unequivocally that the success our kids have had in school is absolutely correlated to how much time they spend in school. We have had some amazing teachers and are thankful for their dedication but the framework needs to be changed. Middle schoolers are not mature enough to handle the current program and course content with two days a week in school, asynchronous learning and Zoom learning the other days. These kids need more consistency and the support of their teachers in person. Kids need to know and feel that they are valued stakeholders in our community and their learning needs met. We have a rising 5th grader and will be facing the same challenges all over again if District 39 does not commit to full in person learning. We need to make plans for our kids- they are counting on us.

Nora Joyce

From: Okka Alberts <[REDACTED]>

Subject: SafeGuard Saliva Screening

Date: January 25, 2021 at 7:41:13 AM CST

To: stonee@wilmette39.org, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, steenm@wilmette39.org, panzicaf@wilmette39.org, fabesl@wilmette39.org, sternwee@wilmette39.org, poehlinga@wilmette39.org

Cc: cremasck@wilmette39.org, demontet@wilmette39.org, swansonk@wilmette39.org

Dear Dr. Cremascoli, Mr. DeMonte, Dr. Swanson, and D39 School Board members:

First, I would like to thank you for all your efforts to bring the COVID SafeGuard Saliva Screening program to D39. I know that it was a significant undertaking, and I am incredibly grateful that the district has invested time, energy, and funds in this program to make our schools safer.

I am now writing to urge you to continue providing the weekly SafeGuard Screening to D39 students and staff on an ongoing basis, beyond the current end date of January 25.

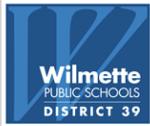
As you know, COVID-19 is still very prevalent in our community; the vaccine rollout has been slow; new and potentially more contagious strains of the virus are emerging in the U.S. and could result in faster spread; and the school buildings are significantly safer for our in-person students and staff with this additional layer of mitigation, which identifies “presumptive positive” cases (likely asymptomatic individuals who would otherwise be present in school). Additionally, when (asymptomatic) individuals are alerted of their “presumptive positive” status, the entire community benefits, as these individuals will likely quarantine to avoid further spread.

Since this program has only recently been rolled out in D39, it may be helpful to look at several months’ worth of data from New Trier High School, which implemented the SafeGuard Screening in November and recently made it mandatory for all in-person students. They have identified a number of “presumptive positive” cases each week, with 9 such cases in the first week of January. Again, these are individuals who were likely asymptomatic and would have attended school in person had they not been notified of their “presumptive positive” status. Please take a look at [New Trier’s COVID Dashboard](#), which demonstrates across several graphs just how instrumental the SafeGuard Screening has been in keeping COVID cases out of the school buildings.

Finally, I encourage you to seek out ways to increase the participation rate in the program, since the higher the participation rate, the more effective the program. The first-week registration rate of 65% was quite low. And while the registration rate in the second week increased to 72%, it appears (based on the SafeGuard screening data in the Metrics Advisory Team report) that out of 1861 students and 406 staff who have registered, only 708 actually submitted samples. In other words, the sign-up rate was still relatively low, and of those who did sign up, only a very small percentage actually submitted samples. Please consider making participation mandatory (as is the case at New Trier), as this would ensure the highest possible participation rate.

Thank you again for all your efforts related to the SafeGuard Screening.

Kind regards,
Okka Alberts



Spring Break

1 message

Kelly Gruner <[REDACTED]>

Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 11:27 AM

To: stonee@wilmette39.org, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, steenm@wilmette39.org, panzicaf@wilmette39.org, fabesl@wilmette39.org, sternwee@wilmette39.org, poehlinga@wilmette39.org, cremasck@wilmette39.com, communications@wilmette39.org

Dear District 39 School Board & Metrics Committee,

Thank you for the fantastic job you have all done in keeping our kids safe and our schools open. We are extremely lucky to live where we do and have a board that has invested an immeasurable amount of time into this community to make the best out of our current environment.

I may be premature with this email but also didn't want it to get lost with a flurry of emails that may come as decisions are being made. I have heard numerous families say they are traveling for Spring Break. I am happy to hear that everyone has said they will just take the 10-day quarantine. The overall feeling is that people have Covid fatigue and need to get out. I think we can all agree that we all have the same feeling but acting on it is different. We are a family that travels, we take every chance we can to explore, see family, etc. but with current guidelines and the feeling that we should do our part we have stayed put. The reason I am writing this is to remind you that there are people following the rules and not traveling. I know the holidays were different due to families getting together and a spike in cases but in this case please don't punish the kids who don't travel and go remote after Spring Break. I have no idea if this is even an option but speculate that it is.

I know between now and then the cases could spike and this would be a moot point but I wanted to get it out there that there are kids and teachers following the rules and shouldn't be punished for other people's actions.

Thank you again for everything that you do, you all are appreciated more than you will ever know!

Sincerely,

Kelly Gruner ([REDACTED] 6th, [REDACTED] 3rd)

From: Go Green Wilmette <gogreenwilmette1@gmail.com>

Subject: Fwd: Join us for a GGW Dark Skies webinar on Monday, Feb. 1 at 7pm

Date: January 28, 2021 at 11:41:35 AM CST

To: fabesl@wilmette39.org, "steenm@wilmette39.org" <steenm@wilmette39.org>, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, "panzicaf@wilmette39.org" <panzicaf@wilmette39.org>, Ellen Sternweiler <sternwee@wilmette39.org>, poehlina@wilmette39.org, cremasck@wilmette39.org, Stan Stankiewicz <stankies@wilmette39.org>, Katie Lee <leek@wilmette39.org>

Dear Kari, Lisa, Stan, Katie and Board Members of District 39:

Go Green Wilmette is launching our alternative to our in-person environmental fair, the on-line, Covid-era, Going Green Matters Webinar Series. We will cover a variety of topics and make every discussion very Wilmette-specific. (Our website for the series will be www.goinggreenmatters.org but it is not quite ready for a public launch.) Katie Lee has already offered to share relevant webinars to her teaching staff.

Our series begins this Monday with a webinar that we very much would like District 39 participation in as it is quite relevant to your facilities - dark skies and outdoor lighting. After the 30 minus presentation, Julie Wolf, former Village Trustee and now Chair of the Wilmette Environmental and Energy Commission and I will lead the discussion about how this is relevant to our community and how we can work together to reduce our light pollution footprint.

Stan and I have discussed this issue as I live right next to Harper School. Despite his concerted efforts to direct the lights on the new Harper addition downward, I can literally read a book in my backyard at night. Our speaker will present valuable information about how to reduce the negative impact of outdoor lighting while not sacrificing security at all - an issue that is, of course, very relevant to the District 39.

You will find below a webinar description and flyer. I very much hope that someone (or multiple) representatives from District 39 will be able to attend the webinar. Please let me know if that is the case. (Pre-registration is required.)

Thanks you so much.

Beth Drucker
President
Go Green Wilmette

[Going Green Matters Webinar Series 2021: Dark Skies](#)

February 1 @ 7:00 pm

Dark Skies: Why Should We Care? What Can We Do?

Protecting the night sky from light pollution supports human health, preserves wildlife and wildlife habitat, and provides visual access to the beauty of celestial objects for us all to enjoy. Adam Kreuzer, an International Dark Sky Association delegate, will present a visually stunning program and discuss how we can work together to fight light pollution and save our dark sky. After the presentation, Julie Wolf, Chair of the Wilmette Environmental and Energy Commission, will lead a discussion about how we all can make a difference in our community.

Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEsfuyopzwrGdzDBxfH--9Eew67GoUzCX0a>

GO GREEN WILMETTE FEATURES:

GOING GREEN MATTERS WEBINAR SERIES: DARK SKIES

Date: February 1st

Time: 7:00 pm



Hosts: Adam Kreuzer &
Go Green Wilmette

Click [HERE](#) to register for free, &
check out www.GoGreenWilmette.org for more!

infection in children and their role as potential transmitters of SARS-CoV-2 with the significant harms of school closure on children's physical health, developmental health, mental health and learning. Given the significant negative impact that the initial prolonged school closure (to in-person learning) had on children and youth, it is our strong opinion that an in-person school model with robust application of the recommended risk mitigation interventions is the best option from an overall health and learning perspective for children of all ages allowing for consistency, stability and equity." ([COVID-19: Guidance for School Operation during the Pandemic \(sickkids.ca\)](#))

There may be a time when children truly must be out of school for prolonged duration, such as due to skyrocketing community transmission with overwhelmed hospitals or emergence of a variant that medically impacts children more severely. It is therefore especially critical to stop squandering our chances to have children fully in school.

Dr. Cremascoli noted during the recent school board meeting that having our middle and junior high children in school every day would allow approximately 4 feet of distancing (statement at approximately 49 minutes into 1/25/21 Board Meeting video). To my understanding, this amount of distancing is fully allowed by the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois State Board of Education, especially between cohorted students and with other precautions in place. At the time of publication, I reviewed the June 23, 2020 ISBE guidance for schools regarding distancing and found the following recommendations applicable to distancing.

-must follows are on page 9, " Districts must follow IDPH guidelines, which provide the following: ...Require social distancing be observed, as much as possible..."

-page 16, "... ability to maintain 6-foot distance, when possible."

-page 22, "To help students comply with social distancing as much as possible, consider revising activities that combine classes or grade levels or require travel to other building..."

-page 23, "Students should remain in small groups with the same students and remain 6 feet apart as much as possible."

-page 34, "Districts should develop procedures to ensure 6-foot physical distance from other persons as much as possible."

Thus, a strict mandate of 6 feet is NOT an absolute requirement, and page 22 also notes that "Maximizing face-to-face time in classrooms is essential." ([Part-3-Transition-Planning-Phase-4.pdf \(isbe.net\)](#))

Updated guidance dated 1/5/21 from the AAP also addresses this issue. "There is a conflict between optimal academic and social/emotional learning in schools and strict adherence to current physical distancing guidelines. For example, the CDC recommends that schools "space seating/desks at least 6 feet apart when feasible." In many school settings, 6 feet between students is not feasible without drastically limiting the number of students... Physical distance between desks should follow current public health guidance, and desks should be placed at least 3 feet apart...Schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to a 6-foot spacing rule between students with the potential downside if remote learning is the only alternative." (Link available through [COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools \(aap.org\)](#).) The AAP states all policy considerations for school COVID-19 plans should start with a goal of having students physically present in school, and they note, "The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in 2020."

Additional reassuring experience comes from hospital inpatient environments where mitigation efforts are good in terms of symptom screening and mask compliance, but where social distancing and cohorting between faculty and staff is impossible. Thus, many hospitals (including mine) have periodically checked for COVID-19 antibodies. Positive rates, which indicate prior COVID-19 infection, have not been markedly higher than the surrounding community (and this includes for those caring directly for COVID-19 positive patients). ([Seroprevalence of SARS-CoV-2 Among Frontline Health Care Personnel in a Multistate Hospital Network — 13 Academic Medical Centers, April–June 2020 | MMWR \(cdc.gov\)](#) and <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2769322>) Thus, distancing may be less critical than other safety precautions when those other mitigation elements are strongly implemented. D39 has thankfully proven it indeed strictly follows precautions. Our wisely adopted saliva screening provides yet another layer of protection that has not even been generally utilized in healthcare workers in the United States.

Data from a newly released study accepted for publication in the respected journal *Pediatrics* of nearly 100,000 students and staff in multiple school districts in North Carolina “support the concept that schools can stay open safely in communities with widespread community transmission.” This study again found extremely limited within-school secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2, and it found ZERO instances of child-to-adult transmission of SARS-CoV-2 within schools. (pediatrics.2020-048090.full.pdf (aappublications.org))

Please stop the irreparable harm to our children as they face a profound lack of education, loss of enthusiasm for school and learning, continued isolation, and increased dependence on “screens”. The teachers’ union should cease being obstructionist as soon as its members are vaccinated. As Canada’s SickKids authors state, “additional delays will inevitably further exacerbate the harms to children...”

Sincerely,
Laura Hemmer, M.D., FASA
(children 8 and 11 years old)

From: jen [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Full-time In-Person School Request

Date: February 5, 2021 at 9:54:35 AM CST

To: "cremasck@wilmette39.org" <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, "stonee@wilmette39.org" <stonee@wilmette39.org>, "cesaretj@wilmette39.org" <cesaretj@wilmette39.org>, "steenm@wilmette39.org" <steenm@wilmette39.org>, "panzicaf@wilmette39.org" <panzicaf@wilmette39.org>, "fabesl@wilmette39.org" <fabesl@wilmette39.org>, "sternwee@wilmette39.org" <sternwee@wilmette39.org>, "poehlinga@wilmette39.org" <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>

Dear Dr. Cremascoli and School Board Members,

I'm the mother of a 6th-grade boy at Highcrest Middle School. He's always been a social kid and an enthusiastic learner. He's also an only child who recently described to me the *loneliness* he feels some days as *crippling*. We've been fortunate enough this year to have an amazing homeroom teacher, Mrs. Bartsch, as well as other outstanding teachers in House 4. Even still, his enthusiasm for learning is waning, test scores dropping, and self-esteem suffering through the lack of regular in-person interaction with other students and teachers.

This week's reports from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other expert organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and UNICEF, recommend that children attend school in-person full-time if at all possible. They all say we must weigh the health risks of COVID-19 versus the impact on mental and developmental health.

From the January 25th D39 School Board Meeting, I understand that you anticipate that teachers and staff will receive both COVID-19 vaccine doses by mid-March. With a plan for teachers to be vaccinated soon, saliva screenings, and consistent evidence that school settings are not a significant transmission driver when safety protocols are followed - it seems the health risks are now less the concern than the weight of mounting mental and developmental health.

I'm asking that D39 leadership and School Board Members to return our children to school full-time in-person.

We moved to this area for the exceptional school system and resources. Thus far, our family has been grateful for a relatively healthy year and some in-person learning, but we're at a breaking point and need to go back to school full-time. *It's not only an academic responsibility we look to our schools for but a social and emotional development.* I've never heard my son so painfully use the word loneliness ever before, and I can only hope he regains the enthusiasm for learning to make-up what has been lost academically.

Please stop the emotional, social, and academic harm being done to our kids and salvage what we can for the rest of this year.

Sincerely,

Jen Giles Okon
(12-year-old boy/Highcrest)

From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Sent: Sunday, February 7, 2021 12:37 PM
To: Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Fwd: Full In-Person Educating

Dear Ms. Hemmer,

Thank you for your email.

At this time, we remain under the guidelines and restrictions set forth by the IDPH and the ISBE for health and safety protocol in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we would love to have all of our 5th-8th grade students on campus 5 days per week, we are limited by the physical space we have available to us. Ensuring 6 feet of distancing between individuals is available in our classroom limits the number of students that we can have on campus at the same time. Presently, we plan to continue with our hybrid model through 3rd quarter and will continue to review and adhere to guidelines for health and safety as we plan for 4th quarter and beyond. In order to bring all students on campus daily in 4th quarter, we would need the guidelines for social distancing to be reduced to 3-4 feet of distancing. We do not expect that to occur before the end of the school year; however, we stand ready to implement a merging of our A and B classroom pods if the guidance was to change. Until then, we will continue to implement our hybrid in-person learning programs in 5th-8th grade. We are currently planning for all students to be able to attend school daily in the 2021-2022 school year, as we anticipate changes to health and safety restrictions as we continue to make progress in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please know that we all would love to have all students on campus all day every day, and we know that our students and parents want the same. We will continue working toward that goal.

Best,

Lisa Schneider Fabes
D39 Board of Education

From: Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Full In-Person Educating
Date: February 7, 2021 at 6:05:35 PM CST
To: "fabesl@wilmette39.org" <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Cc: Micah Hemmer <[REDACTED]>, "poehlinga@wilmette39.org" <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>, "sternwee@wilmette39.org" <sternwee@wilmette39.org>, "cremasck@wilmette39.org" <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, "cesaretj@wilmette39.org" <cesaretj@wilmette39.org>, "steenm@wilmette39.org" <steenm@wilmette39.org>, "stonee@wilmette39.org" <stonee@wilmette39.org>, "panzicaf@wilmette39.org" <panzicaf@wilmette39.org>, Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]>

Dear Ms. Fabes,

I appreciate your response so I know my email was received and reviewed. However, does D39 have additional rules from IDPH and ISBE that are not publicly available? As I specified in my recent email (copied below), every instance of the 6 foot distancing rule is followed by "when possible" or an equivalent statement. The ISBE school transition document I referenced in my below email specifically states, "Executive Order 2020-40, filed on June 4, 2020, allowed schools to reopen for in-person instruction in Phase 3. In-person instruction is strongly encouraged in Phase 4; however, it is critical to note that this does not signify a return to pre-pandemic operations...Require social distancing be observed, as much as possible..."

Similarly, does D39 have non-publicly available guidance from these agencies that is different from private school IDPH/ISBE guidance? ISBE/IDPH guidance states, "All public and nonpublic schools in Illinois serving prekindergarten through 12th grade students must follow these guidelines." However, there are multiple examples in the community of the private schools being more fully in person with well less than 6 feet spacing (as we can even painfully see through their windows while our D39 children are home). Also remember, as I also noted in my below email, the American Academy of Pediatrics has updated their recommendations for schools and notes that 3 feet, in order to have kids in-person full-time, is acceptable. The World Health Organization also continues to recommend 1 meter distancing for schools (WHO checklist last updated 12/11/20 [Checklist to support schools re-opening and preparation for COVID-19 resurgences or similar public health crises \(who.int\)](#)).

Thus, these IDPH and ISBE publicly available guidance documents and orders seem to fully allow D39 to merge A and B classroom pods for the 5-8th grade levels. As there would not be any further of merging of children at the elementary level, they surely should also be allowed a full day of elementary (3:15 dismissal instead of 2:15 Monday-Thursday). As I note in my below email, there should be no further resistance from the teachers' union once their members are fully vaccinated. Please stop the irreparable harm being caused to our children--this can be fully achieved now with the current guidelines and restrictions.

Sincerely,
Laura Hemmer, M.D.

From: Abby Karasick <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Consideration of Mandatory SafeGuard Testing

Date: February 8, 2021 at 9:09:58 AM CST

To: "stonee@wilmette39.org" <stonee@wilmette39.org>, "cesaretj@wilmette39.org" <cesaretj@wilmette39.org>, "steenm@wilmette39.org" <steenm@wilmette39.org>, "panzicaf@wilmette39.org" <panzicaf@wilmette39.org>, "fabesl@wilmette39.org" <fabesl@wilmette39.org>, "sternwee@wilmette39.org" <sternwee@wilmette39.org>, "poehlinga@wilmette39.org" <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>, Tony DeMonte <demontet@wilmette39.org>, Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, Kristin Swanson <swansonk@wilmette39.org>

To the District 39 School Board, Dr. Cremascoli, Mr. DeMonte, and Dr. Swanson,

We hope you all are well. Please find a letter attached re: request for consideration by the Board of Mandatory Safeguard Saliva Testing.

Thank you,

Abby and Steve Karasick

February 8, 2021

Dear Dr. Cremascoli, Mr. DeMonte, Dr. Swanson, and D39 School Board members:

Thank you for continuing the SafeGuard Saliva Screening through the end of February. We hope the program will be extended beyond February and provided on an ongoing basis, especially as we are still learning whether newer strains of the virus will cause accelerated spread in our community.

Over the last two weeks, as parents of a student at WJHS, we have received four notices of five students testing positive on a diagnostic test for Covid-19. These students were all in school after the SafeGuard program had started the week of January 11th. Data is not published on whether or not these students were participating in the SafeGuard screening program.

Even with the recent good news regarding vaccines and lower community positivity rates, Covid-19 is still a risk in our community and schools. District 39 has mandated that students and staff follow a number of mitigation strategies including social distancing and mask wearing while in school. We urge the Board to consider making participation in the SafeGuard screening program mandatory as well. New Trier High School made participation in their SafeGuard screening program mandatory at the beginning of 2021. Just last week, New Trier's SafeGuard program has identified 10 presumptive positive students.

Thank you again for all your efforts related to the SafeGuard Screening program.

Kind Regards,

Abby and Steve Karasick

New cultural training legislation and impact to D39

Elizabeth Karnes ■
To: board@wilmette39.org

Mon, Feb 8, 2021 at 1:50 PM

Dear D39 Board of Directors,

I recently became aware of proposed legislation by the Illinois Board of Education (link below). I have questions as to how this will impact our school district. This legislation is comprehensive and seems to point our main education focus in a different direction. I have been substituting in our schools since November, and after reading through this, I have a good many concerns about how this plays out in the classroom and the impact it will have on our teachers who already have so much on their plates. And I am also concerned that our community may not even be aware of it and it's impact.

I would love the opportunity to hear from you!

Best,
Beth Karnes

Sent from my iPhone

Dear Dr. Cremascoli, Mr. DeMonte, Dr. Swanson, and D39 School Board members:

Thank you for continuing the SafeGuard Saliva Screening through the end of February. I sincerely hope that the program will be **extended beyond February and provided on an ongoing basis** (with no end date) until we have a clearer picture of when a significant percentage of the population will be vaccinated and whether the newer strains of the virus will cause accelerated spread in our community. Since many schools are no longer able to contract with SafeGuard because the lab is at capacity, it would be prudent for us to keep our place in line and not risk being denied this opportunity down the road. Please note that the SafeGuard program is running at New Trier on an ongoing basis, with no end date.

I would also like to urge the Board to **make weekly participation in the program mandatory** for all in-person students. Data are not published on whether students who have tested positive for COVID-19 since the start of the SafeGuard Screening on Jan 7 were participating in the program. However, the following data have been provided in D39's last two Weekly Metrics Reports:

–Jan 21–27:

- 4 students and 4 staff tested positive for COVID-19
- 75.6% (1,963) of in-person students and 80.8% (449) of in-person staff registered to participate in the SafeGuard program (2,412 total), but **only 49% (894) of in-person K–4 students and staff and 57% (745) of in-person 5–8 students (1,639 total) actually submitted samples**
- The SafeGuard Screening identified 0 “presumptive positive” cases

–Jan 28–Feb 3:

- 13 students and 0 staff tested positive for COVID-19
- 79.4% (2,000) of in-person students and 76.2% (403) of in-person staff registered to participate in the SafeGuard program (2,403 total), but **only 55% (990) of in-person K–4 students and staff and 61% (772) of in-person 5–8 students (1,762 total) actually submitted samples**
- The SafeGuard Screening identified 2 “presumptive positive” cases

According to these data, 13 students tested positive for COVID last week. While 79% of in-person students have signed up for the SafeGuard Screening, only 55% at K–4 (including staff) and 61% at 5–8 actually submitted samples last week. (Note that the rate of saliva-sample submission has consistently been low since the start of the program (see, e.g., the previous week's rate: 49% for K–4 and 57% for 5–8).) Since only slightly more than half of in-person students are actually submitting samples, it's likely that a good portion of the 13 positive COVID cases last week were individuals who did not participate in the saliva screening. Had everyone participated, many of these cases would likely have been identified *before* the students attended school in person.

We have all seen the Swiss-cheese model, which demonstrates how each layer of mitigation is imperfect but important, because all the layers work in concert to give us the best possible protection against in-school transmission. We already require students to wear masks and socially distance. Why, then, wouldn't we make the SafeGuard layer of mitigation mandatory as well? This screening is the only tool we have that actually prevents asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic students and staff with the virus from entering school.

New Trier made the SafeGuard Screening mandatory for all in-person students in January. Last week, New Trier identified [10 presumptive positive cases](#) of the virus through the Safeguard Screening program. And in just two days so far this week, the screening at NT has already picked up another 11 presumptive positive cases. I can only assume that D39 would have identified significantly more presumptive positive cases last week had the participation rate been closer to 100% than to 50%.

Again, please consider requiring participation in the SafeGuard program for all in-person students. If families have legitimate reasons for not being able to participate, they could perhaps complete a form to be excused. If families simply don't feel like participating, they can transfer to the all-remote program. If families accidentally miss a sample drop-off, they can complete asynchronous work on days they would otherwise be in school in person that week—or D39 can add an additional mid-week drop-off day for those who miss the first drop-off, so those students can attend school the second half of the week. Note that New Trier can offer excellent guidance on how to mandate participation for in-person students, how to allow for exemptions, and how to transfer those not interested in complying into the all-remote track.

When working to increase or mandate participation, the District should stress to families that this screening is being implemented not only to keep everyone in the community safe by lowering rates of transmission, but also to limit the number of required quarantines and prevent any school closures. Families may have varying concerns (staying healthy, keeping their vulnerable relatives healthy, keeping kids in school). Therefore, communicating *all* of the benefits of the SafeGuard Screening will have the greatest impact in terms of increasing interest in participation.

Finally, I would like to request that current COVID cases and **SafeGuard data be made more visible to D39 families**. On the [COVID Metrics Dashboard](#), it is not clear that the initial table (titled Metrics Reopening Advisory Team) is actually a full report on which you can click. If you do manage to access the weekly report, the SafeGuard data are buried on pages 11–12 and the D39 COVID-positive cases on page 10. Could the graphs from these three pages be added to the very top of the COVID Metrics Dashboard to increase transparency and facilitate navigation for families?

Thank you again for all your efforts regarding the SafeGuard Saliva Screening at D39.

Kind regards,

Maja Kos (mother of a WJHS 7th grader)

D39 Board:

Last week the CDC came out with “school reopening guidelines”. It is pretty clear now that D39 is not going to get any green light for changing to full-time in-person instruction in the near future, including next fall.

Given this situation, I strongly urge D39 Administration to start planning now for the fall and in particular, for students in grades 5 through 8, who have been significantly short changed this year. These students need to be in school EVERY day, even if it is for only half a day. We have the opportunity to increase the amount of core, in-person instruction and to learn from our neighboring districts if we start now.

To address certain comments from the D39 Admin/Board during meetings:

1) Sanitizing and bussing - These were cited as reasons that 1/2 day every day could not be implemented for 3rd quarter. These other NT districts are doing the sanitizing between their two groups of students. Bussing can be managed with enough time even if it means risking a deposit – a well worth expense considering all the other Covid-related expenses.

2) Size of WJHS - This has been cited as a difference between D39 and the other districts. Winnetka and Glencoe have divided their student population into two groups just as D39 has. So, what is the difference? Is the size problem just the inertia for implementing meaningful change?

Some further comments:

1) Assuming half day every day is implemented - please consider making better use of student’s time when they are in school. This year, our 7th graders are in school two days a week. Of their nine-period day, three periods are for lunch, PE and a supervision period. The latter takes the time of the World Language class that meets only twice a week and on the asynchronous days. Also, arts and non-core subjects can be via Zoom. Kenilworth, Winnetka and Glencoe have implemented different variations but they both provide significantly more in-person/synchronous core subject instruction and their students go to school every day.

2) I had spoken to Kenilworth, Winnetka and Glencoe principals and administrators in the fall. They were all very proud of the hybrid models they had in place. In particular, I remember the Glencoe junior high principal had personally changed the model and schedules during the fall. The schedules were complicated out of necessity and difficult to understand but he felt it was worth it. What about working as a consortium with these other school districts? They may have other better ideas for next year.

3) One Board member commented that parents have voted with their feet regarding their satisfaction with the current instruction. Many parents that we have spoken to are so frustrated they don't know what else to do and have largely given up. Right now we have little school choice. Catholic schools in the area are full and are not accepting any more students this year and most likely, next year as well. The private schools are simply too expensive for most families to afford. If D39 expects families to be loyal when the Covid crisis passes and for voters to support schools in future elections, the district needs to be more responsive to its families today.

D39 has been very risk averse with respect to the physical health of the school community. At the same time, this approach has had a devastating effect on the mental health and academic development of the students. There is risk in everything we do and finding an acceptable balance in the risks we take is the real challenge.

As a note, the Catholic Archdiocese has interpreted the "6 feet social distancing if feasible" to mean not feasible and so have only required 3 feet social distancing in classrooms. Other districts that are in school full-time have chosen not to implement pods/bubbles (e.g., middle school in Northbrook District 31). In both these examples, there is no saliva testing and there have been no adverse consequences.

Once again, I urge you to start planning now for next school year so that we can have the best instruction model possible for the students. We all need to assume that the environment next fall will be similar to now. I have heard Admin state that they know the current model is far from perfect. However, if you don't shoot high, you will end up low by design. We simply cannot have another year like the current one for our 5th - 8th grade students.

Thank you,
Evita Vulgaris

From: Michele Coffey <[REDACTED]>

Subject: MAP testing results

Date: February 18, 2021 at 12:18:34 PM CST

To: dominikg@wilmette39.org, Jeff Dees <deesj@wilmette39.org>

Cc: Kari Cremascoli

<cremasck@wilmette39.org>, stonee@wilmette39.org, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, steenm@wilmette39.org

, panzicaf@wilmette39.org, Lisa Schneider Fabes

<fabesl@wilmette39.org>, sternwee@wilmette39.org, poehlinga@wilmette39.org

Good afternoon,

I'm the parent of [REDACTED] a 7th grader in Mrs. Dwenger's homeroom.

I just received Riley's MAP scores and am pretty shocked at how poorly she did. She has made zero growth, in fact, she moved from average to low average. Riley has been a student in D39 since 2nd grade and has never made low growth in either reading or math. I know this is a crazy year and everyone is doing the best that they can but I think it's time we start working on getting the 5th-8th graders back to school more than twice a week. Her scores are alarming, in my opinion.

I have two second graders at McKenzie. One of my daughters was diagnosed with dyslexia last March. Her growth from the fall is High Average in both reading and math...she moved to the 92nd and 95th percentile! Reading her scores was overwhelming...school has always been hard for her. I know it isn't lost on any of you how much remote learning has negatively impacted our 5-8th grade students but as a parent who worked very hard to get the K-4 buildings open for those students, I feel like I've now let down my 7th grader by not fighting hard for her.

Please consider adding back, at the very least, Mondays as was originally planned. The academic, emotional and social implications of continuing to keep these kids home through June is frightening.

Thank you for your time,

~ Michele

Please bring KEEP39 to Romona next year

zarubin3@gmail.com <[REDACTED]>

Fri, Feb 19, 2021 at 10:19
PM

To: Board@wilmette39.org

Esteemed Board members,

I'm writing today in support of the KEEP39 program as a parent of an incoming Romona kindergartener for 2021-2022. The prospect of this program was one of the factors bringing my family to the suburbs and specifically district 39/Romona when we moved here this summer. While we were not around to respond to the initial survey about the program, please note our ardent support for it in advance of your decision on it in your upcoming meeting.

If there is anything additional that I could do to show our support, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Anna Zarubin-Cohen