

**From:** Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: District 39 Board Meeting Update Regarding In-Person Instruction  
**Date:** December 14, 2020 at 12:28:41 PM CST  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>

Dear Ms. O'Meara,

My apologies for the delayed response.

Thank you for your email.

The Board and administration are committed to providing as much in-person instruction as possible, provided we can do it safely. We have modeled a variety of scenarios and found that our current approach achieves that goal. That includes fully remote Mondays, which ensures all students are able to benefit from synchronous instruction. I realize there is confusion about Mondays and will ask the administration to provide additional clarification in one of its upcoming communications. Regarding length of the school year, if it's necessary, we will take a look at making adjustments to the calendar in the new year.

Be well,

Lisa Schneider Fabes  
D39 Board of Education

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Lynn and Mark Omeare  
**Date:** Sun, Dec 6, 2020 at 2:24 PM  
**Subject:** District 39 Board Meeting Update Regarding In-Person Instruction  
**To:** <[stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org)>, <[cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org)>, <[steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org)>, <[panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzicaf@wilmette39.org)>, <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>, <[poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org)>, <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>

Dear Dr. Cremascoli and D39 Board Members:

I am writing you to about some issues are on my mind regarding in- person.

Alternating Mondays

Before the school year started, we were told students in the hybrid model would be going to school on alternating Mondays. What happened to this? The only week the students attended Monday classes was to make up for the days off due to Halloween and Election Day. What happened to change this plan and why was the change never communicated?

More in-person instruction

Neighboring school districts (e.g., Kenilworth and Winnetka) have had in-person instruction every day for all elementary grades, K through 8 . Winnetka's junior high school has accomplished this by providing daily in-person instruction of core subjects to half-classes, split between morning and afternoons, and teaching the non-core subjects remotely during the students' balance of the day. By doing this, they use their students' limited class time more effectively, wasting none of it on lunch or other non-

essential activities. Perhaps District 39 might consider a plan such as this for the second semester? Wilmette seems to have singled out the younger grades and the special needs children and neglected the rest. My child feels like he is being penalized for wanting to go to school and does not understand why some of his friends are in school. Can you give me some insight on what to tell him? He also feels very sad and isolated during lunch and recess. This use to be a time for him to socialize with friends and then burn off energy to help focus him the rest of the day.

Wilmette students could well find themselves at a considerable disadvantage to their peers from other feeder districts (such as those mentioned above) where the schools have successfully provided far more in-person, core subject instruction.

Extending school year.

Upper grade students have certainly missed a great deal of school this year and the quality of the instruction that they have had has been further compromised by so much remote instruction. Given this situation, might the District consider extending the school year through the end of June 2021? From everything we know, things should be relatively normalized by then. Please considering doing something drastic like this for our children's sake.

Regards,  
Lynn O'Meara

From: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Public Comment  
Date: December 14, 2020 at 10:53 AM  
To: board@wilmette39.org



Dr. Cremascoli, made an impassioned speech at the last board meeting that seemed to characterize parents who opposed the “adaptive pause” - instead pleading for more in-person instruction than less - as being “never satisfied” and overtly critical of teachers without any concern for their well-being. Every parent with whom we have spoken has nothing but praise for their children’s teachers and nothing but gratitude for their hard work.

They believe, as do we, that the teachers of Wilmette - just like the teachers of our neighboring communities of Kenilworth, Winnetka, and Glencoe - are among the best, and most dedicated, in the profession.

It is not the teachers that we are calling to task, pleading with them to balance the academic needs **and** the health needs of our children – it is the administration and the board.

Criticism of District 39’s hybrid plan, which has afforded upper level Wilmette students less than 30% in-person instruction, IS NOT criticism of Wilmette teachers, and it is disingenuous of the administration to portray it as such.

The fact is, when it comes to the amount of core subject, in-person instruction, provided to students, District 39 comes in a distant last among all of our neighboring New Trier districts.

These are the students with which our children will have to compete in the very near future.

As the board and administration that heads D39, are you satisfied with this?

Christopher J. Wiczorek, seventh grade parent

*This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.*



## Wonderful job

1 message

---

**Rucha [REDACTED]** >

Sun, Dec 13, 2020 at 3:35 PM

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

Thank you all for the wonderful job you have been doing the last several months and specifically the last several weeks. Your heart, your soul and your blood sweat and tears have been into working with in person instruction. You have used research, evidence and data to to back up your statements. Thank you for everything and thank you for the in person instruction for the week of December 14 - my third grader is thrilled to go in for a week. My kindergartner has thrived with in person instruction as well. Kids need to be in schools and schools are safe. Thank you for your hard work. It will not be forgotten.

- Rucha Patel, DPT

December 14, 2020

To Dr. Cremascoli and District 39 Board:

We have twin 7th graders at WJHS. After talking with the principals at the other three New Trier feeder schools, it is indisputable that Wilmette is providing 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8th graders far less in-person instruction time than any of our neighboring districts. This deficit can only handicap Wilmette 7<sup>th</sup> graders as they and their neighboring peers prepare to take the New Trier High School placement tests next November, and will no doubt set back Wilmette 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in their high school futures as well.

Kenilworth schools are in-person full time, every day, and have had no unplanned days off. In Winnetka, the junior high students go every day for half of a day and core-subjects are taught 100% in person. They also have had little if any deviation of planned school days this year. Glencoe junior high students go every day for half a day as well but for each core subject they rotate so that half of the class is in person one day while the other half is participating via Zoom. Only Wilmette has anything like full asynchronous learning days (which in our household are little more than days off). Also, all of the other three NT districts started the school year on time. Wilmette did not. Surely, these other models are far better both academically and for the social/emotional well-being of their children.

Thirteen years ago, when we became pregnant with twins, we chose Wilmette as the community for our family - first and foremost for the quality of its schools. Now, when our children are in the home stretch to high school, we find ourselves brainstorming about other options to get them daily into classrooms with their teachers and peers.

In summary, I have an urgent question for the D39 Administration and Board:

Is there any hope of D39 re-considering their hybrid plan for the second half of the school year, in light of the much greater level of core subject in-person instruction provided by our neighbors? Can we look to you to get our seventh graders back into their classrooms on an equal footing with our NT neighbors to make up what time they can for the few academic months that are left between now and the New Trier placement exams next November? Or is it necessary for us to move to a neighboring district to give our children a fair chance in high school?

Dr. Cremascoli: We understand that we may be asking a very difficult question and that it may be very hard to accept that the decisions that we have made as a district may have put our children at a disadvantage to our neighbors. But we kindly request that you try to address this question during the meeting tonight as I know several parents who would like to hear the answer. If that is not possible, please announce in what public forum or meeting we might get an answer. This question is not meant as rhetorical criticism – it is a serious inquiry about an important issue of urgent concern for the future of our children. If there is a better plan out there, why can't D39 do an "adaptive leap" and "pivot" to embrace it for the sake of Wilmette students?

Thank you,  
Evita Vulgaris, PhD

**From:** Michele Coffey <[REDACTED]>

**Subject:** THANK YOU!

**Date:** December 7, 2020 at 4:52:45 PM CST

**To:** Kari Cremascoli

<[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>, [stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org), [cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org), [steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org), [panzi  
caf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzi<br/>caf@wilmette39.org), Lisa Schneider Fabes

<[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>, [sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org), [poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org)

Good evening,

I just wanted to send a HUGE THANK YOU to you all. I know these decisions aren't easy ones to make. We all really appreciate the time and thought you put into it and are thrilled with the outcome.

My daughter started screaming when I told her she gets to go back to school next week :)!

Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!!!!

Michele Coffey

From: [REDACTED]

Date: December 5, 2020 at 10:09:58 AM CST

To: [stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org), [cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org), [steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org), [panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzicaf@wilmette39.org), [fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org), [sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org), [poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org), [cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)

g

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Remote learning

Dear Board and Dr. Cremascoli,

I appreciate the time and effort you all have put into in your decision making/communications for this challenging year of school. We all recognize this is a year unlike all others.

That said, I cannot help but voice my frustration with the way D39 has handled remote vs. in-person learning for the elementary school aged children. Surely, in your position, you have compared the actions D39/Wilmette have taken to Kenilworth, Winnetka, Northfield and a host of private schools in the area. They not only had a quicker transition to in person learning at the beginning of the school year but their plans around Thanksgiving/Winter break were well thought out and proactive.

Why is it D39 was not able to come up with clear plan such as Winnetka. In Winnetka, it was announced AHEAD of time that school would be in-person between Thanksgiving Break and Winter Break. No remote learning the week (or in our case weeks) after Thanksgiving. They also announced that after winter break 1 full week of remote learning would occur. This allowed families and teachers to PLAN. They knew to stay home over Thanksgiving break because they could travel over winter break, should they desire to. SIMPLE OUTLINE OF PLANS FOR EVERYONE TO FOLLOW. They're not dealing with the week-by-week fiasco that we seem to have put ourselves into in Wilmette.

The dissatisfaction amongst Wilmette parents and elementary aged students far exceeds that of other districts. I listened to the reading of letters this Monday (one was mine - attached) and all I heard was anger and frustration on behalf of D39 families. This has to sit heavily with you. It does for me – I love Wilmette and it pains me to know our children are not receiving the quality of education they deserve. That quality of education is what has driven families to move to Wilmette in the past – it is one of the reasons my family moved here 2.5 years ago. That's at stake .

Children learn better in-person. Period. No one is going to argue that.  
COVID is not being spread at schools. Data has proven that. No one is going to argue that.  
School is the safest place for children right now. Period.

So the issue appears to be: we don't have staff. Why don't we have staff? Did they travel over break? Are they becoming affected with COVID at an unusually high rate? Can you please provide specific data around what is going on with staff? Why wouldn't we have staff to return to in person for 3-4<sup>th</sup> grades by 12/14? By then any staff members who traveled would be past the 14 day quarantine. And to be honest, I'm struggling with the fact that staff traveled over Thanksgiving when it in turn resulted in hundreds of children suffering by missing essential in person learning. Families were encourage to stay home and note travel, were teachers encouraged to do the same?

Lastly, we need subs. I heard from a parent that she tried to apply to be a sub and she said the process was arduous – requesting college and graduate school transcripts? Is that really necessary?

I do appreciate the Board voting down the recommendation to have remote learning for grades 3-8 the week of Dec 14. At the same time, I don't understand why didn't vote at the same time for grades 3-4 to be in person the week of 12/14.

I look forward to hearing your feedback, response.  
Courtney

Courtney Greene

**From:** Abby Karasick <[REDACTED]>

**Subject:** Adaptive pause

**Date:** December 3, 2020 at 7:20:55 PM CST

**To:** Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>, Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>, Tony DeMonte

<[demontet@wilmette39.org](mailto:demontet@wilmette39.org)>, [stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org), [cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org), [steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org), [panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzicaf@wilmette39.org), Sternweiler-F <[arsternweiler@gmail.com](mailto:arsternweiler@gmail.com)>, [poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org)

To Dr. Cremascoli, The District 39 School Board, and The District 39 Metrics Advisory Committee:

We are writing to express our support for the adaptive pause of in-person learning for the week of December 7<sup>th</sup> and potentially December 14<sup>th</sup>. As parents, faculty and community members, we all agree that we want our kids in school. We should also recognize that our kids have been very fortunate to have had any in-person learning this fall. Each of us has friends and family members in areas such as New York, San Francisco, Washington D.C. and local communities such as Evanston whose children have not been inside a school since March. This is due to the herculean efforts of our school faculty and administrators, but also due to our community tolerance for some risk. What makes these decisions so hard is that knowing with certainty the magnitude of the risk is just not possible. The disease has not been around long enough to provide those answers.

Continuing the adaptive pause for the week of December 14<sup>th</sup> will keep our 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders out of school for two days. What we gain as a community is time for the trend of declining positivity rates and new case rates seen since mid-November to continue. We allow for the impact of holiday travel and returning college students to subside. And importantly, we give time for District 39 to implement testing surveillance programs proposed by the Risk Metrics Advisory team. All of this should allow our children to safely return to school in the new year.

Thank you very much for your continued time and extraordinary efforts.

Abby & Steve Karasick

**From:** Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>

**Subject: Re: Covid testing for what purpose?**

**Date:** December 2, 2020 at 11:02:39 AM CST

**To:** [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Peterson,

Thank you for your email. Access to PCR testing has been identified as a need across our community for staff and students, and we are happy to assist in coordinating this partnership to ensure easy and reliable access to this important testing. Testing is critical for anyone who is symptomatic and/or has a concern of possible exposure. This need extends beyond our school district and school days. It has proven to be very beneficial to our staff, and we are proud to expand this access to our students. We see it as beneficial to our entire community as well as to our in-person school operations to assist those in need of testing to access it. We hope this partnership is a benefit in that regard.

Regarding costs and resources allocated toward Ambry PCR testing for students, health insurance helps to cover the costs of diagnostic testing for any individual who is symptomatic or has had known exposure. The additional costs for processing PCR testing through the district via this partnership with Ambry is covered by the district fees that are assessed to parents for access to testing (\$20). Parents are also welcome to access PCR testing through their physician and/or the many public testing sites throughout our region, if they wish. This is simply a convenience being offered to those who are interested and in need.

Regarding screening testing on a regular basis for non-diagnostic purposes, similar to that being used at New Trier, the district has also been diligently exploring these options as well since September. We have been closely monitoring and learning from New Trier's experience, as well as exploring other options for other screening similar testing programs, such as those used at some universities as well as corporate institutions. The team who has been diligently pursuing this evaluation is prepared to make a recommendation to the Board to adopt a contract with SafeGuard Testing (the testing program implemented at New Trier). Dr. Campbell of SafeGuard Testing will present to the School Board on Monday, December 7th, and a contract for testing will be recommended to the Board. If approved, this program will be available for a small cohort of students and our staff in December, and launched district-wide in January following the recommendation of Dr. Campbell.

I hope this information is helpful to you. I appreciate your feedback and questions, as well as your advocacy and support.

Your partner in education,

Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Wilmette Public Schools District 39  
[www.wilmette39.org](http://www.wilmette39.org) ~ 847.512.6030

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Christine PETERSON [REDACTED] >

**Date:** Tue, Dec 1, 2020 at 1:02 PM

Subject: Covid testing for what purpose?

To: <[Poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:Poehlinga@wilmette39.org)>, <[Stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:Stonee@wilmette39.org)>, <[cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org)>, <[Steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:Steenm@wilmette39.org)>, <[Panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:Panzicaf@wilmette39.org)>, <[Sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:Sternwee@wilmette39.org)>

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <[communications@wilmette39.org](mailto:communications@wilmette39.org)>

Dear gracious school board:

What is the purpose of testing the children if they are not going to school? It seems like an irresponsible and wasteful use of resources. I would sign up for testing in a second if my child was guaranteed an in-school education.

I know that staffing is an issue. I wish I could help out but I am a teacher and in school every day. Monday-Friday. Every. Day. I was asked by my employer not to travel over Thanksgiving. So I didn't.

District 39 is moving in the wrong direction and I am sad our children are victims of it. Winnetka is in school! New Trier is in school! The local Montessori school where I teach is in school.

Like me, I know you have children at New Trier. I hope you look to them and consider the testing as a means to get the children in school MORE not LESS.

"Your partner in education",  
Christine Peterson

**From:** Cindy Levine <[preslww20@gmail.com](mailto:preslww20@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** D39 Committee of the Whole - Request for Video Stream and Posted Materials

**Date:** December 1, 2020 at 3:25:01 PM CST

**To:** Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>, Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>, Frank Panzica

<[panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzicaf@wilmette39.org)>, [poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org), [sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org), [steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org), [cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org), [stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org)

**Cc:** Wendy Zun <[preslww21@gmail.com](mailto:preslww21@gmail.com)>

December 1, 2020

Dear Superintendent Cremascoli, President Schneider-Fabes and D39 Board of Education Members,

The LWV-Wilmette commends the D39 Board for continuing to meet and address the complex and ever-changing issues around education during a global public health crisis along with other more typical issues facing a high performing school district.

As we are all aware, there is significant community interest in the discussions the BOE is having, the information it is sharing, and the decisions it is making. During this pandemic, community members are reliant on remote access to the meetings in order to stay informed and give meaningful input on issues you are considering. With that in mind, we request that the Committee of the Whole (COW) Meetings be available via contemporaneous and recorded video stream and that materials discussed during the COW be posted on-line before the meeting. As consistent meeting attendees, our observers can confirm that "attending" a board meeting via audio recording is difficult, especially without access to documents. Aside from not being able to identify speakers in an audio recording, it is difficult to follow along when speakers are referencing a slideshow that listeners cannot see, or when referencing documents that the public has not had access to. While we understand that these documents are in draft form, meant for discussion purposes, the public should also have the opportunity to comment on drafts while there is still a meaningful opportunity to shape them.

We believe that adopting these practices for the D39 COW meetings will improve communication and information flow with the community, and enable community members to react and respond from an informed perspective.

Thank you again for your work as you navigate these challenging times.

Warm regards,  
Cindy Levine and Wendy Zun  
LWV-W Co-Presidents

Cindy Levine  
LWV-Wilmette Co-President  
[preslww20@gmail.com](mailto:preslww20@gmail.com)

**From:** Jennifer Latimer <[REDACTED]>

**Subject:** Please keep schools open for IN PERSON learning

**Date:** November 30, 2020 at 4:10:51 PM CST

**To:** [cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org), [steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org), [stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org), [cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org), [paziacaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:paziacaf@wilmette39.org), [fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org), [sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org), [poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org)

**Cc:** Jennifer Latimer <[REDACTED]>, Chris Latimer <[REDACTED]>

To District 39 Board of Education Members,

First, thank you for all of your hard work, time and energy spent on keeping our schools open for in person learning thus far.

We are disappointed to hear that, once again, the union representatives are suggesting a shift to remote learning in the coming weeks. District 39 has done a tremendous job preparing for and keeping our childrens and staff's health a top priority. With no evidence of in-school Covid transmission, there is no reason we should continue remote learning. The 11/30 metrics report shows that the positivity rate in both Wilmette and NT Township have decreased below the 8% threshold. These metrics should allow for a return to in person learning starting the week of December 7th.

Please keep the schools open for in person learning.

Thanks again for all that you do!

Sincerely,  
Jennifer and Chris Latimer  
8th grader - WJH  
6th grader - Highcrest  
2nd grader - Harper

**From:** Chris Woehrle <[REDACTED]>

**Subject: Re: Keep D39 schools open between Thanksgiving and Christmas**

**Date:** November 30, 2020 at 5:32:33 PM CST

**To:** [cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org), [stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org), [cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org), [steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org), [pazicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:pazicaf@wilmette39.org), [fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org), [sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org), [poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org)

Dear Dr. Cremascoli and D39 Board of Education,

I'm writing to you regarding some of the information coming out of the metrics committee and the potential outcome of not having any in-person learning for D39 students between Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks, continuing on through the first week in January. I wrote a letter to you on November 9th (included in this thread), and feel compelled to write again.

From what I can tell, it seems there is a push to shut down in-person learning for D39 schools, not necessarily because of health issues directly related to the pandemic, but because of potential staffing issues with teachers between now and Christmas. I find this very perplexing. Why would there not be enough teachers available to teach between now and Christmas?? I have a 3rd grade boy at Central School. The day-to-day operation of Central School has gone very well for months now. A very few isolated cases of Covid with no spread attributed to the school. Why would things change now?? That is a very important question, and it deserves a very clear answer. If, for example, you had received word that 25 students at Central School and 7 of its teachers have been diagnosed with Covid-19, then of course that would be very strong evidence to take a look at temporarily shutting down Central School. But that is clearly not the case. What has changed, and why are some now saying there is going to be a shortage of teachers in December??

Dr. Cremascoli, in your response to my email from November 9th you mentioned that the district remains committed to continuing in-person offerings as long as we can do so safely. Shutting down in-person learning because some teachers might not show up to do their jobs does not make the school unsafe in and of itself. Have work-arounds been thoroughly vetted to see if there are ways of keeping at least most kids in school? I know there are many parents who would volunteer to help kids in classrooms, for example. And if a teacher doesn't come in for a week, perhaps for that week only their specific class goes to remote learning. I don't know what the specific answer is, but to say at this point that there should be no in-person learning for the next 7 weeks is outrageous.

I urge all of you to vote to keep D39 schools open to in-person learning for all that want it, starting December 7th, as is currently planned. Thank you for your continued hard work and dedication to D39.

Regards,

Chris Woehrle  
D39 Parent

On Mon, Nov 9, 2020 at 12:17 PM Chris Woehrle <[REDACTED]> wrote:  
Dear Dr. Cremascoli and D39 Board of Education,

I'm writing to you regarding what has been going on with the metrics committee over the last few weeks, and the recent push from WEA members and others to close D39 schools between Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks.

I do not support this initiative in any way. Our kids belong in school. To reverse course at this point and go remote, there would have to be substantial data to support that move. As far as I can tell, it simply doesn't exist. My son is a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader at Central School. There have been a couple of infections at his school since we started in-person learning, and they have been dealt with effectively. From what I understand there have been individual cases reported in other schools as well. And again, they have been dealt with effectively. The fact remains, there have been NO outbreaks in our schools, and our schools remain a very safe place for our students and teachers.

Please do not give credence to those trying to shut down the schools with no concrete data to back up their claims. The WEA rep on the metrics committee that used a shark analogy is simply trying to play to people's emotions. Divers swimming with more sharks in the sea conjures up images of violent attacks, blood in the water, perhaps people dying. That is ridiculous. Our schools are clearly not spreading this virus. Furthermore, if you use the logic that kids shouldn't come back to school after Thanksgiving due to potential increased exposure to the virus during the break, you can use the same logic for the first two weeks in January when kids will be coming back from Christmas break. Should we shut down the schools until mid-January? That would be 8 weeks our students would be away from their teachers and classmates. It doesn't take a genius to see this is where the WEA is headed with their arguments. Keeping our kids out of school for 8 weeks (or 6 weeks) would be a complete disaster. And pivoting in this direction without significant, new evidence to support making such a move would simply be irresponsible.

In closing, I want to state again that there have been no school outbreaks to date in Wilmette. In addition, schools being open has not been identified as a factor that increases positivity rates, and schools during this pandemic have proven to be a very safe place for kids and teachers. For the people pushing to close D39 schools between Thanksgiving and Christmas, the onus is clearly on them to provide evidence that supports their claims. In the absence of that, our kids should remain in school.

Regards,

Chris Woehrle  
D39 Parent

**From:** Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>

**Subject:** Re: Please keep schools open!

**Date:** December 1, 2020 at 2:14:19 PM CST

**To:** Michelle Baby <[REDACTED]>

**Cc:** Heather Glowacki <[glowackh@wilmette39.org](mailto:glowackh@wilmette39.org)>, Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>

Dear Michelle,

Thanks for your email. And thank you for your offer to volunteer. I have copied Dr. Glowacki, who can follow-up with you if you would like to become a substitute teacher.

I am sorry your experience with remote learning has not been a positive one. Please know that the board and administration have been unwavering in our commitment to provide in-person instruction, as long as we can do so safely. We were deeply saddened to make the decision to limit in-person instruction in the days ahead. We understand the negative impact this has on students and families like yours.

As was shared at the metrics and board meetings yesterday, here's where we are:

External metrics remain high despite mitigation efforts. They have stabilized but not declined significantly. We still do not have any evidence of in-school transmission. Our data tells us that school continues to be one of the safest places to be. Covering for staff absences has been a challenge – and that challenge is growing.

We have a higher than usual need for subs due to staff illness or their need to quarantine due to possible exposure. We have gotten close to not being able to adequately staff our schools, but to date have always been able to do so. Through the tremendous work of our administrators, our teachers, our support staff and our substitutes, we have been able to manage despite exceptionally challenging staffing.

That has changed because we are compounding those challenges with two new factors:

First – at least 10% of D39 staff are required to quarantine following holiday break – for a variety of reasons. Travel or exposure requires them to quarantine for 2 weeks. That means more than 30 staff will remain at home for the next two weeks. Combine that with the increasing challenges of staff who need to remain home due to the care needs of their own children and household members – and that puts an increased demand on the number of subs we need on a daily basis.

Second – we have recruited a large pool of substitute teachers but are having trouble finding a sufficient number of substitutes who are able and willing to work in December, as many wish to avoid unnecessary exposure prior to the holidays or are unable to commit to daily work within our schools. That means we don't have the pool of substitutes to cover the increasing number of staff needing to quarantine – regardless of the reason

When you add those two factors, to the existing staffing challenges – we do not have sufficient staff to keep schools open and to provide the consistency and predictability that effective instruction requires. If we can't provide in-person instruction for all, we need to prioritize in person instruction for our learners who need it the most – the youngest and those with comprehensive needs.

Providing in person instruction for pre-K - 8 will require additional sacrifice and commitment from all of us . Last night I urged the entire D39 family – staff and students alike - to understand – that the choices they make are not made in a vacuum. Those choices will determine how we are able to proceed moving forward.

Be well,

Lisa Schneider Fabes  
D39 Board of Education

On Mon, Nov 30, 2020 at 3:54 PM Michelle Baby <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Board Members,

As a mother of three kids at HIghcrest, WJHS & New Trier, I am witnessing first-hand the effects of remote learning, and it is not positive. I implore you to please consider prioritizing the students mental, social and emotional health and education over the union, and PLEASE keep them in school, and move to full time as quickly as possible.

I have been so impressed by how well D39 has handled the small amount of covid cases and kept the students safe. Every article I read about how other countries are handling the pandemic always includes prioritizing kids in school full time, due to the low transmission. I am not seeing any tangible data showing otherwise.

My kids are struggling, and I know we are not alone. At this point it is already going to take months to catch up and reverse the setbacks. Let's not make it years.

Thank you for your tireless hours in figuring all of this out. My husband and I work full time but if needed, I will find the time to volunteer to help in-person, in school, however I can. It's the very least I can do, to do my part.

Michelle Bâby

**From:** Molly McDermott <[REDACTED]>

**Subject:** Please re-open Wilmette Schools on 12/7 for in-person learning

**Date:** November 30, 2020 at 3:37:40 PM CST

**To:** "[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)" <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>, "[panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzicaf@wilmette39.org)" <[panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzicaf@wilmette39.org)>, "[steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org)" <[steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org)>, "[stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org)" <[stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org)>, "[cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org)" <[cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org)>, "[panziacaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panziacaf@wilmette39.org)" <[panziacaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panziacaf@wilmette39.org)>, "[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)" <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>, "[sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org)" <[sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org)>, "[poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org)" <[poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org)>

**Cc:** Peter McDermott <[REDACTED]>

To Board of Education,

Thank you for your continued support and hard work in trying to keep our schools open for in-person learning.

It is extremely disappointing to hear the union representatives are pushing to not go-in person, especially as our neighboring school districts in Winnetka and Kenilworth remain open with in-person instruction daily.

With "no evidence of in-school transmission" there is no reason we should continue to remote learning when the amazing staff within District 39 has succeed in providing in-person learning and isolating specific classrooms as needed.

Additionally, the 11/30 metrics report shows that the positivity rate in both Wilmette and NT Township have decreased below the 8% threshold since the decision for a 1-week pause. This decrease should return the kids to school immediately.

Remote learning has been inconsistent and provided little value to both our 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. To miss another 3+ weeks of in-person learning will be detrimental to both their educational success and mental health, especially our 6<sup>th</sup> grader who with an IEP is falling farther and farther behind his peers. These kids need to be in school and learn in-person. It is safe and vital for these kids to learn in-person.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns,

Molly & Peter McDermott

**From:** Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>

**Subject: Re: December 7**

**Date:** December 1, 2020 at 2:23:33 PM CST

**To:** Rachel Heiligman <[REDACTED]>

**Cc:** Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>

Hi Rachel,

Thanks for your email. Sorry I am responding today in reverse order.

The board and administration have been unwavering in our commitment to provide in-person instruction, as long as we can do so safely. We were deeply saddened to make the decision to limit in-person instruction in the days ahead. We understand the negative impact this has on students and families. The decision was based on staffing challenges, not safety.

As was shared at the metrics and board meetings yesterday, here's where we are:

External metrics remain high despite mitigation efforts. They have stabilized but not declined significantly. We still do not have any evidence of in-school transmission. Our data tells us that school continues to be one of the safest places to be. Covering for staff absences has been a challenge – and that challenge is growing.

We have a higher than usual need for subs due to staff illness or their need to quarantine due to possible exposure. We have gotten close to not being able to adequately staff our schools, but to date have always been able to do so. Through the tremendous work of our administrators, our teachers, our support staff and our substitutes, we have been able to manage despite exceptionally challenging staffing.

That has changed because we are compounding those challenges with two new factors:

First – at least 10% of D39 staff are required to quarantine following holiday break – for a variety of reasons. Travel or exposure requires them to quarantine for 2 weeks. That means more than 30 staff will remain at home for the next two weeks. Combine that with the increasing challenges of staff who need to remain home due to the care needs of their own children and household members – and that puts an increased demand on the number of subs we need on a daily basis.

Second – we have recruited a large pool of substitute teachers but are having trouble finding a sufficient number of substitutes who are able and willing to work in December, as many wish to avoid unnecessary exposure prior to the holidays or are unable to commit to daily work within our schools. That means we don't have the pool of substitutes to cover the increasing number of staff needing to quarantine – regardless of the reason.

When you add those two factors, to the existing staffing challenges – we do not have sufficient staff to keep schools open and to provide the consistency and predictability that effective instruction requires. If we can't provide in-person instruction for all, we need to prioritize in person instruction for our learners who need it the most – the youngest and those with comprehensive needs.

Providing in person instruction for pre-K - 8 will require additional sacrifice and commitment from all of us . Last night I urged the entire D39 family – staff and students alike - to understand – that the choices they make are not made in a vacuum. Those choices will determine how we are able to proceed moving forward.

Be well,

Lisa Schneider Fabes  
D39 Board of Education

On Sun, Nov 29, 2020 at 8:00 PM Rachel Heiligman <[REDACTED]> wrote:  
Hello Dr. Cremascoli and board members

Hope everyone has had a nice thanksgiving holiday.

I have been looking at the latest metrics in preparation for tomorrow's metric meeting.

As of 11/28, our local (Wilmette) numbers have not shifted much and still remain below 8% (latest number is 7.19). The regional numbers have decreased more than 2 percentage points since the last meeting on 11/20.

The positivity rate for Winnetka is 9.61% and they are not taking an adaptive pause. Their in-person students return to school tomorrow, November 30.

It is important that we stay on track and get the kids back in school on December 7th. I anticipate there will be a push from the WEA folks for at least an additional week of remote. There is no reason for this based on the local positivity rates and the steady decline in regional numbers over the last ten days.

As always, thank you for your continued commitment to this process.

Rachel

**From:** Rucha <[REDACTED]>

**Subject:** The Atlantic: Why Are We Closing Schools?

**Date:** November 20, 2020 at 7:36:15 PM CST

**To:** [cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org), [panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzicaf@wilmette39.org), [poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org), [publiccomment@wilmette39.org](mailto:publiccomment@wilmette39.org), [steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org), [sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org), [stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org), Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>, Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>

Wonderful article and D39 has implemented the highest level of safety. You all did an amazing A+ job and we are all so grateful for the in person learning. Standing ovation to you all from all of us in person families! Covid and schools staying open are not matched. Kids need school and they are safe in them as the world has shown.

### **Why Are We Closing Schools?**

Keeping kids out of the classroom will make recovering from the pandemic harder in the long term, while not keeping us any safer in the near term.

Read in The Atlantic: <https://apple.news/AWNOzzYbzRk6JkKphuJpuXA>

Shared from [Apple News](#)

- Rucha Patel, DPT

**From:** Rachel Heiligman [REDACTED] >

**Subject:** Question regarding after thanksgiving closure

**Date:** November 16, 2020 at 5:09:02 PM CST

**To:** Kari Cremascoli

<[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>, [steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org), [fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org), [panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzicaf@wilmette39.org), [cesar  
etj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesar<br/>etj@wilmette39.org), [stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org), [sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org), [poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org)

**Cc:** [PublicComment@wilmette39.org](mailto:PublicComment@wilmette39.org)

Hello all

I'm concerned about the short term adaptive pause. My concern is this: the numbers may be high for quite some time, how will you measure the safety to get the kids back in school if there will be no current in-school metrics to record while they are remote? It is the in-school metrics that have justified the safety of keeping schools open.

The WEA reps and teachers will drag their feet upon any discussion regarding returning to in-person instruction after we take this adaptive pause. Why is this decision being made without a stay at home order from the governor? It appears that we are doing this to appease the teachers/WEA. Heather Glowacki said in the 11/13 metric meeting that in her opinion, in the absence of any stay at home order, our schools should remain open. She is absolutely right. If we close while our in-school metrics remain good, we are handing over all of our leverage to the WEA. In-person learning could be taken away from our kids indefinitely! Community numbers are not going to magically go down. The WEA will exploit the community rising numbers to get what they want.

If this closure is about travel over the holidays, then let's focus on that and make adjustments accordingly. Teachers and families who choose to travel should be required to disclose this and can quarantine upon return. Shutting down the whole district to allow for individual travel is not the answer. The WEA has wanted remote since August. What they predicted and were banking on was widespread infection upon schools opening. That never happened. Our students unnecessarily lost 5 weeks of in-person instruction this fall because of the WEA. This shutdown between thanksgiving and winter break has been in the rumor mill since the early fall. This closure is happening because the WEA wants it. It does not at all reflect our school metrics. How disappointing.

This is the wrong move. The community numbers are on the rise but the in-school numbers have remained favorable. Without a governor stay at home order, this decision has no basis and gives all of the power to the WEA. The leaders of the WEA who have been driving this movement are not considering the well being of the students. They dismiss what the school metrics have demonstrated and they continue to push their agenda. Appeasing them now without a stay at home order in place will only make it more difficult to return to in-person learning for the remainder of the school year. All the while, our students will suffer academically, socially and emotionally. I ask you to please consider this and do what's right.

Respectfully,  
Rachel Heiligman

**From:** Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>

**Subject: Re: School In Person**

**Date:** November 16, 2020 at 5:53:23 PM CST

**To:** N Sloan <[REDACTED]>

**Cc:** Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>

Good evening Ms. Sloan,

Thank you for your email.

The board is committed to keeping schools open as long as it is safe and operationally possible to do so. We may need to take a short adaptive pause. But if we do, our intent is that it will be a short pause - enough time to allow the metrics to stabilize and for us to ensure we have the people we need to staff the school appropriately. This will be discussed at this evening's meeting.

We agree with you - school is a safe place to be. We do not have any confirmed cases of in-school transmission. Studies are showing it's safe to have kids in school. We have the structure and mitigation procedures in place to make our schools safer than almost any other place at this point.

That said, there is a real risk that increasing community spread will mean increasing cases entering our schools from sources outside our doors. We will be adding additional mitigation measures in the near future to mitigate some of that risk. But for community spread to decrease, we need everyone to be vigilant and follow the guidance on how to reduce exposure.

In terms of your request for student performance data, this evening we will be reviewing the 2020 MAP testing data and comparing it to 2019 data. Here's the link to the report that will be discussed. [http://www.wilmette39.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_360846/File/Board%20of%20Ed/PublicPacket/2020-11-16.html](http://www.wilmette39.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_360846/File/Board%20of%20Ed/PublicPacket/2020-11-16.html)

Planning for 2021 and the summer is taking place now. Dr. Cremascoli will be sharing what that will look like at subsequent board meetings.

Be well,

Lisa Schneider Fabes  
D39 Board of Education

On Mon, Nov 16, 2020 at 4:19 PM N Sloan <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Members of D39 School Board:

I received the e-mail from the Metrics Reopening Team and urge you to keep our kids learning in school and not stop in-person learning. Without evidence of transmission in our schools and with only three weeks of learning left before winter break, there is no overwhelming rationale for closing our schools. In fact, ending in-person instruction for a considerable length of time will likely erase any gains the kids have made learning as often happens during a long pause in school. I urge you to share with the community any available data on how well e-learning has worked for our students this past year; perhaps D39 MAP test results or any other data points you have. Please share how D39 e-learning can benefit our students. We are eight months into this experiment and there should be some data demonstrating what works and what does not. I see the results in my home and it is my opinion that e-learning is not only NOT beneficial but can have a regressive impact on learning and academic confidence, particularly at certain grade levels and in certain subjects.

Furthermore, is the District working towards catching the kids up academically? What are the plans for 2021? What are the plans for summer school? We need to start planning ahead now with innovative ideas such a small group / block style instruction, extra learning opportunities, using weekends or school breaks to foster learning. What are the plans? This pandemic does not appear to be going away any time soon.

Nora Joyce  
Wilmette, IL

**From:** Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>  
**Subject: Re: Please Keep D39 Open ... and move to 100%**  
**Date:** November 16, 2020 at 5:56:53 PM CST  
**To:** Shannon Geier [REDACTED] >  
**Cc:** Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>

Dear Ms. Geier,

Thank you for your email.

The board is committed to keeping schools open as long as it is safe and operationally possible to do so. We may need to take a short adaptive pause in the future. But if we do, our intent is that it will be a short pause - enough time to allow the metrics to stabilize and for us to ensure we have the people we need to staff the school appropriately. This will be discussed at this evening's board meeting.

We agree with you - school is a safe place to be. We do not have any confirmed cases of in-school transmission. Studies are showing it's safe to have kids in school. We have the structure and mitigation procedures in place to make our schools safer than almost any other place at this point.

That said, there is a real risk that increasing community spread will mean increasing cases entering our schools from sources outside our doors. We will be adding additional mitigation measures in the near future to mitigate some of that risk. But for community spread to decrease, we need everyone to be vigilant and follow the guidance on how to reduce exposure.

Be well,

Lisa Schneider Fabes  
D39 Board of Education

On Mon, Nov 16, 2020 at 3:11 PM Shannon Geier <[REDACTED]> wrote:  
Dear Ms. Schneider-Fabes and Board Members,

I am writing to urge you to keep District 39 open and, if anything, move to 100% capacity, for those who would like to attend school.

While statistics show an uptick in positive results, likely due to much more testing now than when we were first exposed to COVID, the death rate has not increased much if at all from the early numbers. This shows us that the death rate is much much lower than originally thought. Most importantly, the district's and country's numbers are conclusively showing that the student-aged population is not the population that is spreading the virus, nor the population that is at risk.

Conversely, our children are suffering real and harsh consequences (socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally) that could last a lifetime, as a result of the Board's decision to keep them isolated. What is especially harmful about this is that the decision to keep them isolated is based on a grossly disproportionate fear of COVID, as it relates to their lives. Our energies should be spent on protecting the elderly and groups at risk by supporting them, not making school-aged children quarantine. My family has members who are at risk and I do not suggest anyone should ignore those risks and fears. But let's have confidence in the considerable steps taken by the Board to support and protect the at-risk population... and allow our children back in school. Until then, all 3 of my children (and others) will continue to suffer from this isolation, socially, physically, emotionally, and academically. We know what is happening to these kids and we are not paying enough attention to the clear and obvious impact that this extended isolation has on kids, and it's breaking my heart.

Teachers are essential. We need them now more than ever to help these children through this difficult time. We need teachers to provide a learning environment that is conducive to learning and growth.... academically, socially, physically, and emotionally. These kids have paid a big enough price while waiting for the school district to get safe protocols in place, for treatments to develop, and for a vaccine to be developed. 8 months is long enough. The system might not be perfect, but it can certainly handle COVID as safely as possible, and in a way that is commensurate with the risks. We can no longer choose to focus on COVID, while letting these other important considerations take a back seat.

It is time to get our children back in the classroom.

Please keep D39 open and continue to open to 100%.

Sincerely,

Shannon Geier

██████████

**From:** Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>

**Subject:** Re: Hybrid learning

**Date:** November 16, 2020 at 6:05:29 PM CST

**To:** Lisa Cox <[REDACTED]>

**Cc:** Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>

Thank you for this article Lisa.

We are committed to keeping schools open as long as it is safe and operationally possible to do so.

Be well,

Lisa

On Mon, Nov 16, 2020 at 10:27 AM Lisa Cox <[lisa.cox3@gmail.com](mailto:lisa.cox3@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hi Lisa,

As usual, thank you for your thoughtful response. I am sure you are already aware, but thought I would share the below on-point article, in today's New York Times:

[View in browser|nytimes.com](#)

---

The New York Times  
**The Morning**

November 16, 2020

---



By [David Leonhardt](#)

**Good morning. The U.S. and Europe are responding to the latest virus waves differently, and one approach is working better than the other.**

---

-



A restaurant open for take out in Nice, France. Sebastien Nogier/EPA, via Shutterstock

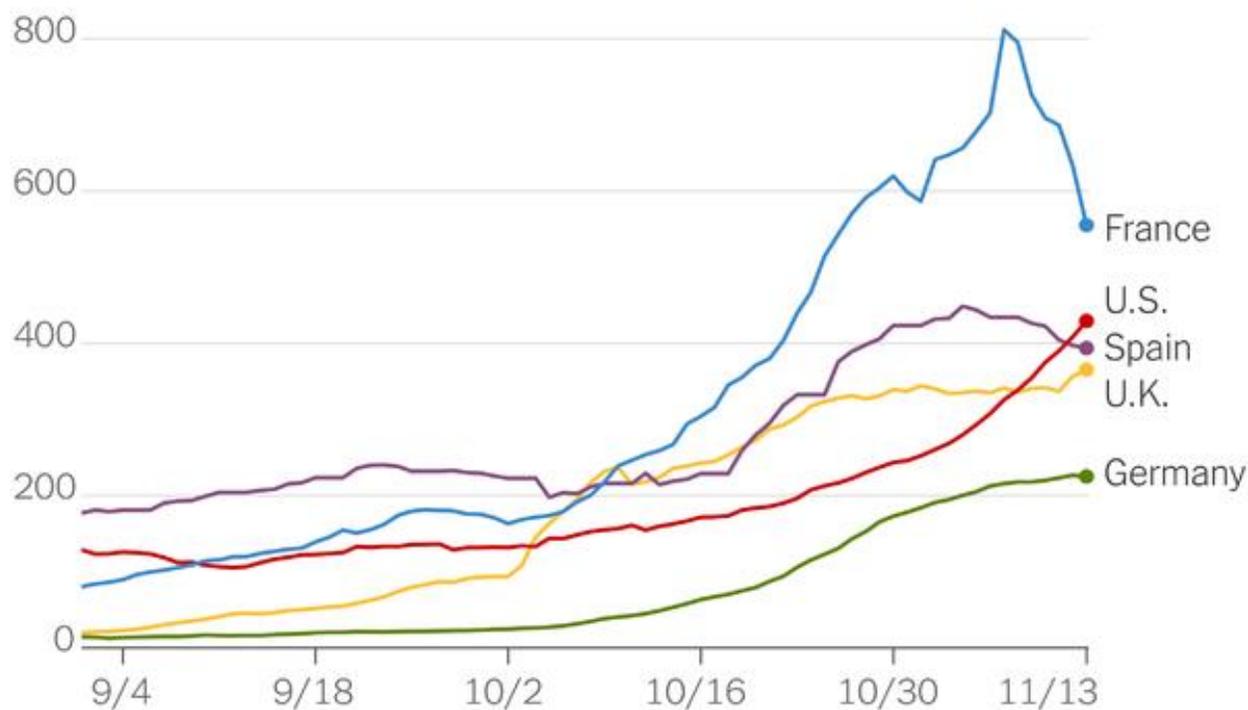
## Cocktails? Yes. School? No.

As the coronavirus has surged again in recent weeks, much of the United States has chosen to keep restaurants open and schools closed. Much of Europe has done the opposite.

The European approach seems to be working better.

Look at this chart, which shows the number of new daily virus cases in five countries, adjusted for population size:

## New daily coronavirus cases per million residents



Based on a rolling average of the previous seven days.

By The New York Times

As you can see, both the U.S. and Europe have been coping with severe outbreaks, with caseloads rising even faster in much of Europe than in the U.S. during much of this fall. But over the past two weeks, France, Germany, Spain and Britain have managed to reduce their growth rates.

**What is Europe doing differently?** It is cracking down on the kind of indoor gatherings that most commonly spread the virus. England [closed](#) pubs, restaurants, gyms and more on Nov. 5 and announced they would remain closed until at least Dec. 2. France, Germany's regional governments and the Catalonia region of Spain have also shut restaurants, among other businesses.

"I'm sure the Europeans didn't want to restrict their activities any more than we do," Janet Baseman, an epidemiologist at the University of Washington, told me over the weekend. "Everyone is tired and ready for this to end, but we have to accept the reality of the data before us."

Many Americans have resisted accepting that reality. Across much of the country, restaurants remain open for indoor dining. Last week, New York State [announced](#) a new policy that public health experts consider to be a bizarre middle ground: Businesses with a liquor license can stay open until 10 p.m.

**The one indoor activity that appears to present less risk is school, especially elementary school.** Why? Young children seem to spread the virus less often than adults do. “Research has shown that if you put social-distancing protocols in place, school is actually quite a safe environment,” Andreas Schleicher, who studies schools for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris, [told NPR](#).

Closing schools and switching entirely to remote learning, on the other hand, has big social costs. Children are [learning less](#), and many parents, [mostly mothers](#), have dropped out of the labor force. The U.S. is suffering from both of these problems *and* from a raging pandemic.

There are no easy answers, to be sure. Closing restaurants and other businesses creates economic hardship (which some European countries are trying to reduce [through government aid](#)).

And the virus is now spreading so rapidly in the U.S. that keeping schools open does pose risks, including the chance that teachers, janitors and other workers infect one another. To keep schools open in a safe way, the U.S. would probably first need to close other public places. Only a few states — including Michigan, Oregon, New Mexico and Washington — have [closed indoor dining recently](#).

“The U.S. case and hospitalization numbers we’re seeing right now are chilling,” Baseman said.

But if there are no perfect solutions to the pandemic, there are better and worse ones. Right now, the U.S. seems to be falling well short of what’s possible.

On Wed, Nov 11, 2020 at 6:05 PM Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)> wrote:  
Hi Soo & everyone on this chain,

I am adding to Dr. Cremascoli's thanks for your email and support.

The administration and Board are committed to keeping schools open as long as it is safe and operationally possible to do so.

We do not have any confirmed cases of in-school transmission. Studies are showing it's safe to have kids in school. We have the structure and mitigation procedures in place to make our schools safer than almost any other place at this point.

That said, there is a real risk that increasing community spread will mean increasing cases entering our schools from sources outside our doors. We will be adding additional mitigation measures in the near future to mitigate some of that risk. I urge you to urge your friends and neighbors to stay vigilant and follow the recommended safety precautions. It will take collective action to keep the school doors open.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Best,  
Lisa

On Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 9:35 PM soo kim <[REDACTED]> wrote:  
Dear Wilmette Superintendent and Board President,

This Wilmette parent group and I would like to voice our avid support for in person learning. We share the views of the American Academy of Pediatrics that socialization beyond close friends and family is a critical component of child development and hugely influential in their overall maturation and mental health. Although the current remote option is notably improved from what was offered in the spring, we highly value in person school learning and would advocate for even more in person interactions if possible. We are larger in numbers beyond this small group but just learned of the various complaints that may potentially jeopardize even the limited in person learning currently in place and as a result we are sending you this quick note. If necessary, we and other parents would gladly provide more support for expanded in person learning. Please advise and take this into consideration before any extreme changes reverting back to fully remote are implemented. Thank you.

Regards,  
Soo Romanoff

Pediatrician statement:  
<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2020/pediatricians-educators-and-superintendents-urge-a-safe-return-to-school-this-fall/>

*This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.*

Lisa Cox  
[REDACTED]

**From:** Rucha [REDACTED] >

**Subject:** Plea to keep in person open

**Date:** November 15, 2020 at 8:25:25 PM CST

**To:** [cesaretj@wilmette39.org](mailto:cesaretj@wilmette39.org), [panzicaf@wilmette39.org](mailto:panzicaf@wilmette39.org), [poehlinga@wilmette39.org](mailto:poehlinga@wilmette39.org), [publiccomment@wilmette39.org](mailto:publiccomment@wilmette39.org), [steenm@wilmette39.org](mailto:steenm@wilmette39.org), [sternwee@wilmette39.org](mailto:sternwee@wilmette39.org), [stonee@wilmette39.org](mailto:stonee@wilmette39.org), Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>, Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>

All research and data has shown schools are NOT super spreaders. I'm an essential worker and we are not ordered to stay at home. The articles posted to the D39 metrics meeting two weeks ago pointed to schools staying open despite lockdowns in countries. Schools are the SAFEST place for children. D39 has done a wonderful job with kids in masks, social distancing and cleaning measures and ZERO covid cases have come from schools. The elementary kids NEED to be in person learning environments. The stay at home advisories do NOT include in person schools. Closing schools between thanksgiving and Christmas does not need to happen. Need for a shift to remote does not need to occur for children. The children are the ones losing in the need for adult behavior to improve. My kindergartner can not sit in front of a screen all day. There will be more stress and tears than anyone needs during covid. Kids in schools is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. My pediatrician was SO THRILLED that my kids were in daily in person instruction. She said that is what kids need and kids are NOT getting covid at an exponential rate. She prefers kids in schools for many reasons -social, emotional and mental health. WHO has sites schools closing has not controlled community positivity rates. Epidemiologists have sited the exact same thing. Schools are safest. The community has canceled lots of thanksgiving travels and gatherings for schools to remain open. Closing schools will only allow for further spread and letting everyone's guards down. School is the only hope we have left right now to do the masking good for all.

Please consider data, science, research, masks and social distancing and the YOUNG children before shutting schools down for 3 weeks for no reason at all for risk mitigation.

- Dr. Rucha Patel

**From:** Lisa Schneider Fabes <[fabesl@wilmette39.org](mailto:fabesl@wilmette39.org)>

**Subject: Re: A Note In Support of an Adaptive Pause because of Surging COVID metrics in Wilmette**

**Date:** November 16, 2020 at 6:26:13 PM CST

**To:** Lauri Fisher <[REDACTED]>

**Cc:** Kari Cremascoli <[cremasck@wilmette39.org](mailto:cremasck@wilmette39.org)>

Hi Lauri,

Thank you for your email. My apologies for the delay in responding.

The board is committed to keeping schools open as long as it is safe and operationally possible to do so. While it's true, community spread is rapidly increasing, we still do not have any confirmed cases of in-school transmission. In addition, studies are showing it's safe to have kids in school. We have the structure and mitigation procedures in place to make our schools safer than almost any other place at this point.

That being said, we hear your concerns and that of others. We are constantly reviewing our practices and making modifications. In addition, we may need to take a short adaptive pause. But if we do, our intent is that it will be a short pause - enough time to allow the metrics to stabilize and for us to ensure we have the people we need to staff the school appropriately. This will be discussed at this evening's board meeting.

There is a real risk that increasing community spread will mean increasing cases entering our schools from sources outside our doors. We will be adding additional mitigation measures in the near future to mitigate some of that risk. But for community spread to decrease, we need everyone to be vigilant and follow the guidance on how to reduce exposure.

All my best,

Lisa

On Sun, Nov 8, 2020 at 6:32 PM Lauri Fisher <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Lisa, I just wanted to send this to you, because I have pressing concerns about the current situation. Hope you are well, best, Lauri Fisher

To The Board of Education, Dr. Cremascoli, The Metrics Advisory Board, Kate Dominique and Jeff Dees,

Our family chose the hybrid learning model, and in so doing, accepted a certain level of risk for the benefit of in-person learning. We are grateful to the teachers and administration for the extraordinary effort they have made for our kids to have in-person learning while trying to maintain safety. Right now, however, my parental warning bells are going off because of the alarming surge in COVID positivity in Wilmette, which, is increasing daily, at an exponential rate (over 8% as I write this). We are unwilling to take on this current unreasonable covid transmission risk in order to attend in-person school. This has escalated to a level way beyond what we initially signed up for, and would never have agreed to attend in-person school under these

current circumstances. To be clear, we do not want to join the all-remote cohort. We want to continue attending hybrid in-person classes, but we were confident that the D39 COVID Metrics Advisory Board, which was established for the sole purpose of closely monitoring these metrics, and enforcing safety mitigations in school, would swiftly pivot to remote when and if the numbers increased to protect our students, teachers and community. I assumed that the Advisory Board would establish safe and protective thresholds linked to community and state transmission levels that we would adhere to. Choosing the hybrid model did not mean in-person school at any cost. We assumed it meant in-person school when the numbers during the pandemic allowed.

For the past week, my son, who attends WJHS, and is in the hybrid cohort, did not attend his in-person school days because we do not feel safe or comfortable with in-person learning during sustained COVID surges in our community. In Kate Dominique's Weekly Highlights she wrote that this was frowned upon, and that the D39 hybrid programming was not set up for an in-person student to stay home and still participate in school that day. I do not want to be put in this scary and exposed position. It is reckless and unfair. Wilmette is in the WARNING ZONE in every data point, Cook County is worse. If D39 is not going to pivot to remote learning when every data point demonstrates that we are in the highest risk for in-school transmission, then the families who chose hybrid but are rightfully concerned for their health and safety will be forced to make the stressful decision to feel forced to keep their kids home. If a school bus was driving through yellow lights and then red lights- would you let your child ride that bus? How can our families trust the judgement of the D39 Covid Metrics Advisory Board? This past Friday when they met they discussed the following:

1.) The Wilmette positivity rate has been climbing at an alarming rate over the past two weeks. They talked about pivoting to remote because of the heightened risk of in-school transmission which correlates with community spread. They mentioned that teachers and staff were scared and worried for their own safety and the safety of their families. They talked about how there was no definitive way to know if there had already been in school transmission because we don't have a rapid testing program yet, and there are asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic cases that go unidentified, i.e. no way to know when a kid who tests positive first became contagious. But then they decided, again, to just wait it out.

2.) They discussed that there was a surge of new cases in Wilmette. I want to add that over the past 14 days there have been **426** new positive cases of COVID. According to the CDC indicator and thresholds for risk: any amount over **200** cases in 14 days puts us in the **highest risk of transmission in schools** category.

3.) The heightened risk of exposure during lunch came up **again**, because this is when kids take off their masks indoors. During a period of high community COVID transmission, like the one we are now experiencing, this lunch practice is something that **breaks all the rules that protect us** and our families: no masks, indoors with up to 16 other kids, eating, AKA: increased risk of being in close contact with airborne droplets of the virus from a simple cough, sneeze, talking or laughing (all normal kid behaviors). There is nothing safe or protective about how D39 is doing lunch, and it needs to be addressed, and changed (not just mentioned in the weekly meeting). It was suggested that they have started showing movies during lunch to help prevent conversation among the students (as a mitigation strategy). We need to do better than that. This is a potentially deadly virus. Lunch inside without masks creates a risk of exposure and transmission that negates the other mitigations they use all day.

I urge you to pivot to virtual learning, for now, to have an adaptive PAUSE, just until the number of covid cases decrease, and until our district adds a rapid saliva testing to our mitigation strategy. I think as a protective practice it would be in everybody's best interest to establish reasonable thresholds on our dashboard, and flexibly pivot to remote when numbers go up. This practice would not only protect the health and safety of our entire community, but would ease the anxiety and pressure for all of us. It would be a move towards transparency that would create trust. Let's not wait for an outbreak or a critical outcome. Let's partner to protect the health and safety of our students, teachers, families and whole community while still maintaining a vibrant and dynamic virtual learning experience. Thank you for your time, Lauri Fisher