

From: Lisa Breen [REDACTED]
Subject: Please vote to combine A & B groups!
Date: March 22, 2021 at 6:45 PM
To: board@wilmette39.org, Kari Cremascoli cremasck@wilmette39.org, John Breen [REDACTED]



Dear D39 Board of Education,

I have been following the developments of our school district since the Covid lockdown began last March. Amid several frustrations with our district, I feel like the plan to move forward and combine the A and B groups for the 5th -8th graders is a great one. It comes with not only strong supportive data, but several recommendations from accredited institutions that reopening schools is safe and necessary for students and their well being.

I am hopeful the board can be supportive to the students and their educational, social, emotional and developmental needs. It is the students time, and it is worth every effort and/or pivot to make this full day in person learning option happen for them.

~Lisa Breen

~Highcrest and Harper 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.

From: Mary Kate Lubawski [REDACTED]
Subject: Updated - A note of thanks
Date: March 22, 2021 at 7:22 PM
To: Board@wilmette39.org

ML

Dear Dr. Cemascoli and District 39 Board of Education,

We are writing to share our genuine appreciation for the teachers, support staff, student service providers, office staff, custodial staff, nurses, kitchen staff, and school administrators who have made this school year possible for our students.

Our two children are in elementary school and we are so happy with how they have been supported during this school year. The dedication of the teachers and staff within their school reminds us how fortunate we are to be part of this community.

We know this dedication spans across all D39 schools and staff, from pre-school to 8th grade, whether staff members are working in-person or working remotely.

Our family is grateful to all of the individuals doing the work each and every day in our schools. Your commitment is inspiring. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Mary Kate and Kevin Lubawski

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Mary Kate Lubawski

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.

From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Full-time In-Person School Request
Date: March 27, 2021 at 10:36:54 AM CDT
To: "██████████" <██████████>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Jen,
Thanks for your email. I share your joy.

Enjoy your break as well.

All my best,
Lisa

On Sat, Mar 27, 2021 at 10:07 AM ██████████ <██████████> wrote:
Lisa,

I wanted to write to say we are thrilled the students are going back to school full-time on April 12th. My son is thrilled!

We appreciate all the work you guys have done to make this happen. Returning full-time now will be such a positive bridge to the summer and next year, which we need to get us back to "normal" eventually.

I appreciate your communication with me during this time.

Have a lovely Spring Break!

Best,
Jen

On Feb 15, 2021, at 3:04 PM, Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org> wrote:

Good afternoon Ms. Giles Okon,

I am sorry my response was disappointing.

We are unable to comply with the 6 feet of distance in middle school and junior high. That is the limiting factor.

We have been closely following guidance since COVID began. And we have had tremendous success maintaining a healthy environment. Therefore, we remain committed to staying that course. That being said, we are exploring 4th quarter opportunities, given the opportunities our staff has had with the vaccine rollout. If we decide to implement alternatives, we will be asking our regulatory bodies to confirm that these changes still mean we are adhering to the guidelines.

The Board and administration hopes we are able to bring everyone back soon.

Best,
Lisa

On Wed, Feb 10, 2021 at 5:30 PM ██████████ <██████████> wrote:
Hi Mrs. Fabes,

I appreciate you getting back to me, but I have to say I'm disappointed in the response. Is the physical space issue the only thing holding us back? I understand continuing the hybrid model until all our teachers are vaccinated, but I'd hoped to hear there was a working plan to get the kids back to school full-time 4th quarter.

Are there any other solutions? Is it possible to do tents in the 4 Quarter in spring weather? Half days?

With all other safety measures in place, including saliva testing, managing a shorter physical distance seems workable at the risk of our children's emotional and social health.

Is there a contact at the IDPH and the ISBE to voice our concern about the mounting damage to our kids?

I'm not ready to completely give up on this year for my son. Most kids, not just my son, are suffering emotionally, socially, and academically.

Thanks for your time.

Jen

On Feb 5, 2021, at 3:43 PM, Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org> wrote:

Ms. Giles Okon,
Thank you for your email.

I am sorry to hear how hard this year has been so hard for your son.

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 and the requirement for 6 feet of distancing between students. 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 and appreciate your support.

All my best,

Lisa Schneider Fabes
D39 Board of Education

On Fri, Feb 5, 2021 at 9:54 AM [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]> wrote:
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: Maja Kos <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Parent Support for Saliva Screening at D39

Date: April 9, 2021 at 8:41:19 PM CDT

To: stonee@wilmette39.org, cesarej@wilmette39.org, Lisa Schneider Fabes

<fabesl@wilmette39.org>, panzicaf@wilmette39.org, poehlinga@wilmette39.org, steenm@wilmette39.org, sternwee@wilmette39.org, Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org [REDACTED]>, Bonnie Kim <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Robyn Schaefer <[REDACTED]>, Denise Kenny <[REDACTED]>, Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]>, Claire Hoppenworth <[REDACTED]>, Louisa Kunzler <[REDACTED]>, Tyler Kahdeman <[REDACTED]>, Meagan Carmichael <[REDACTED]>, Sarah Black <[REDACTED]>, Dave Lundy <[REDACTED]>, Nicole Boomgaarden <[REDACTED]>, Deborah Whalen <[REDACTED]>, Samantha Weber <[REDACTED]>, Tiffany Myers <[REDACTED]>, Marna Bolger <[REDACTED]>, Susie Walton <[REDACTED]>, Mandy Pekin <[REDACTED]>, Malaika Myers <[REDACTED]>, Christine Montaquila <[REDACTED]>, Okka Alberts <[REDACTED]>, Molly Regan <[REDACTED]>, Jen <[REDACTED]>, Peggy <[REDACTED]>, Johanna Danz <[REDACTED]>, Kristen DeNicolò <[REDACTED]>, Guryan <[REDACTED]>, Amy oseland <[REDACTED]>, Maja Kos <[REDACTED]>, Abigail Karasick <[REDACTED]>, Shannon Lee <[REDACTED]>, Lisa Acker <[REDACTED]>, Sara Lapidus <[REDACTED]>, Jeanne Tromp <[REDACTED]>, Anna Veluz-Wilkins <[REDACTED]>, Juliet Kelso <[REDACTED]>, Laura Werling <[REDACTED]>, kristina ingrid olsen <[REDACTED]>, Jessy Ferdman <[REDACTED]>, Denise Schneider <[REDACTED]>, David Ouyang <[REDACTED]>, Lisa Oldson <[REDACTED]>, Suzanne Day <[REDACTED]>, Traci Knudson <[REDACTED]>, Liz Gmail <[REDACTED]>, CeCe Gobdel <[REDACTED]>, "(James) Harrison" <[REDACTED]>, Sarah Fox <[REDACTED]>, Erika Hlavacek <[REDACTED]>, Jennifer Campbell <[REDACTED]>, Julie Tag <[REDACTED]>, Kim Simon <[REDACTED]>, Jennifer Jacobsen <[REDACTED]>, Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]>, SHOSHANA BUCHHOLZ MILLER <[REDACTED]>, jessica eliscu <[REDACTED]>, Melissa Fenwick <[REDACTED]>, Maggie Burton <[REDACTED]>, Bertha Flores Moreno <[REDACTED]>, Julie Rakay <[REDACTED]>, Jane Tomlinson <[REDACTED]>, Kersten Tatarelis <[REDACTED]>, Inger Tanderup <[REDACTED]>

Dear D39 Board of Education:

Thank you for agreeing to extend the Safeguard screening program by 2 weeks, through the end of April. We are aware this decision was not made lightly and has an impact on administrative time and resources.

We are now writing to ask that you maintain Safeguard or another screening program **through the end of the school year, with no pause in screening**. Starting in the second week of the 4th quarter, the distance between students will decrease and class size will increase. With these changes, a screening program will only become *more* important and will allow us to finish out the year with appropriate safety measures in place. It will also help keep our kids in school by limiting lengthy quarantines. Extending the program until the end of April gives us only 2 weeks to see the impact of our decreased mitigations. To properly assess the transition, it would be most beneficial to extend the program through the end of the school year, which would only entail adding on 6 more weeks to the current screening schedule. It is important to start planning for this now, to give both the vendor and the administration sufficient time to prepare for D39's continued participation in the program.

After hearing the discussion regarding Safeguard at the last Board meeting, we thought it would be helpful to clarify a few points that were discussed at the meeting.

First, Safeguard is a **screening tool**.

- Safeguard is **not a diagnostic test**. It is in no way comparable to PCR testing in function or purpose.
- Safeguard provides the benefit of screening out an asymptomatic individual **before** they enter school. A PCR test verifies someone is positive after they have been notified of exposure or developed symptoms.
- We are clarifying this point because during the meeting, one of the Board members said, "PCR appears to be the better test." Additionally, it was repeatedly stated at the meeting that resources will be redirected from Safeguard to increasing access to PCR tests.

The Board expressed a concern that the screening has been seen by some families as an "all clear" to engage in other activities that lack safety mitigations such as masking, distancing, etc. The best way to ensure proper use of the screening is for the District to emphasize to families that a negative screening result is *not* the same as a negative result from a diagnostic test. For example, an x-ray is a diagnostic test; it says, "you have a broken arm" or "you do not have a broken arm." The screening program works differently: it is meant to work in conjunction with other mitigation strategies, such as masking and social distancing, to prevent Covid transmission within schools. This is analogous to the "Swiss cheese model": the more mitigations you layer on, the less chance there is that transmission will occur (because each hole of the Swiss cheese is covered by another layer). Rather than taking away the screening program, when so many families place tremendous value on this critical mitigation layer, the District should consistently and clearly provide families with this additional information about the purpose of the screening.

Another point that was brought up as a concern about continuing with Safeguard was allocation of resources. On several occasions during the meeting, it was stated that resources would be redirected to additional lunch supervision and access to PCR tests. As explained above, PCR tests serve an entirely different purpose and are in no way a substitute for a screening program. Moreover, PCR tests are now widely available, and often at no cost to the patient. On the other hand, if Safeguard is discontinued,

what screening tool will be available to our students? There has not yet been a discussion of a replacement screening program for our school community. Also, it is unclear to us why we cannot maintain both sufficient lunch supervision and a screening program. Many parents have volunteered to help put together saliva-screening kits and would be willing to help in other ways as well. And half of all saliva screening has been funded by the families themselves. Certainly, the Wilmette School District can ensure its students have access to both a screening program, which keeps them safe and in school, and lunch supervision.

The Board raised a concern about the value of Safeguard, because it has only identified “a few cases.” The value is clear: Safeguard identified 6 cases before the students entered school for the week, and that number might have been significantly greater if participation in the program had been higher. Even identifying 1 or 2 positive cases before they enter school holds great value. The touchpoints of a positive COVID case become exponential.

Finally, if there are concerns by the administration, the Board, or any subcommittees about whether this screening is performing accurately, several questions must be addressed prior to any decision to discontinue the program, and the findings must be communicated in a transparent way to the community.

(1) What analysis has been done to measure the impact on the program of consistently low participation rates (only slightly above 50%) and possible bias between the participating and nonparticipating groups?

(2) Are the many other schools (including New Trier) that use this screening having the same concerns and planning to discontinue the program?

(3) Data was collected in an environment that will look completely different in the 4th quarter (less distancing, more kids, new variants). Is it appropriate to extrapolate the results from an environment that looked nothing like the one we will have in the 4th quarter?

After these questions have been answered, if concerns persist, the district should explore other screening programs, and not just do away with screening altogether. Our school community has clearly voiced that it wants a screening program, and the CDC is now [publicly recommending](#) screening programs as a critical component of a safe and robust full-time school reopening. Furthermore, if the district does choose to transition to a different screening program, it is imperative that there not be a gap in screening offered at D39.

Once again, thank you for your partnership and consideration of the support for a screening program at D39 demonstrated by the 174 parents who have signed below.

Maja Kos
Rebecca and Jon Guryan
Abby and Steve Karasick
Lauri and Doug Fisher
Mike and Amy Oseland
Nicholas Butovich
Robyn and Andy Schaefer
Laura Fisher
Denise and Marty Kenny
Claire and Mitch Hoppenworth
Meg and Tyler Kahdeman
Meagan and Steve Carmichael

Sarah Black
Dave Lundy and Jen Jobrack
Ted and Michele Epps
Nicole Boomgarden
Deborah Whalen
Samantha Weber
Mike and Tiffany Myers
John and Marna Bolger
Susan and Tony Walton
Billy and Mandy Pekin
Malaika Myers
Christine Montaquila and Brad Williams
Okka Alberts and Wolfram Lackner
Molly and Jim Regan
Jen and Bill Truskowski
Marjorie Steadman-Shaw
Johanna and Jason Danz
Kristen DeNicolo
Marnie VanderVoort
Victoria Berry
Casey and David Brown
Christine Ferdinand
Michael and Nancy Himmelfarb
Diana Harr
Theia Friestedt
Alesha and Christophe Romatier
Meg Gieselman
Shannon Lee
Jennifer Nelson
Lisa Acker
Melissa and Chris Meers
Sara and David Lapidus
Jeanne Tromp
Anna and John Wilkins
Emily and Steve Zivin
Laura and Krist Werling
Christine and Pat Quinn
Jessy and Bobby Ferdman
Kristina Olsen and Sidney Regalado
Wataru and Noriko Yasohama
Laurey and Chris Tussing
Denise and Bret Schneider
Aimee and Tyler Koski
Kim and Dave Ouyang
Lynne Abbott
Lisa Oldson
Suzanne and Brian Day
Karli Bertocchi
Arielle Heneghan
Jen Suplee
Nancy Dolan and Dan Levine

Traci Knudson
Elizabeth and Ronnen Belkind
Niamh Whelan and Scott Reiter
Terri and Doug Fischer
Elizabeth and Michael Clarke
Amy and Brian Hague
Georgia Argionis
Cece and Evan Gobdel
Karen and George Rafeedie
Amanda and Jeff Doblin
Lucy and Bob Burne
Amy and Steve Weir
Sarah and Peter Hepner
Christi Harrison
Lisa Gold and Gregg Fisher
Sarah Fox
Erika and Jeff Hlavacek
Genny Mills
Michele Gili Sherman and Alan Mater
Valerie Tynkov
Laura Austin
Marjie Murphy
Silvia Fernandez
John and Elizabeth Dischner
Jen and Mark Campolieto
Julie Shayman Tag
Kim and Eric Simon
Stacy Flanigan
Jennifer Jacobsen
Jodi and Howard Soriano
Laura and Micah Hammer
Victor and Shoshana Miller
Jessica Eliscu
Melissa Fenwick
Maggie Burton
Carolyn and Jon Gilbert
Bertha Flores Moreno and Felipe Jimenez
Kim and Matt Peters
Julie Rakay
Michele and Chris Oh
Svetlana and Donald Chae
Jane and Joe Tomlinson
Kelly and Andy Warner
Kersten and Neal Tatarelis
Inger T. Klixbull

From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Parent Support for Saliva Screening at D39

Date: April 13, 2021 at 2:47:57 PM CDT

To: Maja Kos <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, [REDACTED], Bonnie Kim <[REDACTED]>, Robyn Schaefer <[REDACTED]>, Denise Kenny <[REDACTED]>, Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]>, Claire Hoppenworth <[REDACTED]>, Louisa Kunzler <[REDACTED]>, Tyler Kahdeman <[REDACTED]>, Meagan Carmichael <[REDACTED]>, Sarah Black <[REDACTED]>, Dave Lundy <[REDACTED]>, Nicole Boomgaarden <[REDACTED]>, Deborah Whalen <[REDACTED]>, Samantha Weber <[REDACTED]>, Tiffany Myers <[REDACTED]>, Marna Bolger <[REDACTED]>, Susie Walton <[REDACTED]>, Mandy Pekin <[REDACTED]>, Malaika Myers <[REDACTED]>, Christine Montaquila <[REDACTED]>, Okka Alberts <[REDACTED]>, Molly Regan <[REDACTED]>, Jen <[REDACTED]>, Peggy <[REDACTED]>, Johanna Danz <[REDACTED]>, Kristen DeNicolò <[REDACTED]>, Guryan <[REDACTED]>, Amy oseland <[REDACTED]>, Abigail Karasick <[REDACTED]>, Shannon Lee <[REDACTED]>, Lisa Acker <[REDACTED]>, Sara Lapidus <[REDACTED]>, Jeanne Tromp <[REDACTED]>, Anna Veluz-Wilkins <[REDACTED]>, Laura Werling <[REDACTED]>, Juliet Kelso <[REDACTED]>, Jessy Ferdman <[REDACTED]>, Denise Schneider <[REDACTED]>, David Ouyang <[REDACTED]>, Lisa Oldson <[REDACTED]>, Suzanne Day <[REDACTED]>, Traci Knudson <[REDACTED]>, Liz Gmail <[REDACTED]>, CeCe Gobdel <[REDACTED]>, "(James) Harrison" <[REDACTED]>, Sarah Fox <[REDACTED]>, Erika Hlavacek <[REDACTED]>, Jennifer Campbell <[REDACTED]>, Julie T <[REDACTED]>, Jennifer Jacobsen <[REDACTED]>, Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]>, SHOSHANA BUCHHOLZ MILLER <[REDACTED]>, jessica eliscu <[REDACTED]>, Melissa Fenwick <[REDACTED]>, Maggie Burton <[REDACTED]>, Bertha Flores Moreno <[REDACTED]>, Julie Rakay <[REDACTED]>, Jane Tomlinson <[REDACTED]>, Kersten Tarelis <[REDACTED]>, Inger Tanderup <[REDACTED]>

Dear Maja and co-signers,

Thank you for your email and on-going advocacy for the Safeguard Screening program. The Board has received and will thoughtfully review the input you have provided.

The Board shares your commitment to ensuring our schools are as safe as possible. We will continue to review experience data and look forward to an update from our Metrics Team, as well. The Board will discuss this at the April board meeting.

All my best,

Lisa

From: Maja Kos <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Suggestions for Improving the Saliva-Screening Program at D39

Date: April 13, 2021 at 2:34:59 PM CDT

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

Cc: Bonnie Kim <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED]

Dear Dr. Cremascoli and D39 BOE,

Thank you for all of your efforts to bring our children back to school five days per week. I am writing to offer some suggestions to make this transition even more successful, as I believe it is important to continue to make adjustments and optimize processes as we move through the last quarter of this academic year.

Specifically, I feel that a stronger saliva-screening program will help keep positive cases out of classrooms—where the number of students has increased and distancing has decreased—and limit necessary quarantines. These quarantines require 10 days (or perhaps 8, if the 10 days include a weekend) of remote synchronous school or 10 days of asynchronous makeup work, when only some students in a class are required to quarantine. This latter scenario might happen, for example, if a student is exposed to a positive case in accelerated math and as a result has to quarantine, while the rest of his homeroom continues learning in person.

On March 19, we sent a letter signed by numerous parents asking for the saliva-screening program to be made mandatory at the 5–8 level. We also provided a number of possible solutions to facilitate a move to mandatory participation. These solutions included adding a mid-week drop-off day or giving each student one grace day (or rather, week) if they forgot to submit a sample in a given week. Another proposed solution was to allow families who forgot to submit a saliva sample to submit a negative rapid PCR or antigen test result for a quicker return to school. We also suggested that the district could allow families with unique, legitimate concerns to be excused from the participation requirement.

At the last board meeting, the mandatory-participation issue—which had been requested by so many D39 parents—was barely even mentioned. It was quickly dismissed as not feasible due to D39's setup being different from New Trier's in that classes are not livestreamed via Zoom. I am hoping you will reconsider this mandatory component, as it is so important to making the screening program most effective. Could you please explore the above suggestions for facilitating mandatory participation and provide the community with a response to each of the proposed solutions?

Finally, another issue has come up in this first week of full-time in-person instruction: the saliva-sample collection takes place on Monday morning, so the samples cannot be processed before the students attend school. This means that once cases are identified through the screening, all exposed classes have to begin their quarantine. Would it be possible to either 1) have synchronous remote instruction on Mondays to allow for the samples to be processed *before* the children go to school (one synchronous day per week seems much better than 10 straight days of quarantine, potentially with asynchronous makeup work) or 2) move the sample collection to Fridays, so quarantines can include two weekends rather than one, thereby decreasing the necessary number of missed in-person days?

Thank you very much for taking these points into consideration.

Kind regards,

Maja Kos (mother of a WJHS 7th grader)

From: Maja Kos <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Parent Support for Saliva Screening at D39
Date: April 14, 2021 at 12:00:43 AM CDT
To: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, [REDACTED], Bonnie Kim <[REDACTED]>, Robyn Schaefer <[REDACTED]>, Denise Kenny <[REDACTED]>, Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]>, Claire Hoppenworth <[REDACTED]>, Louisa Kunzler <[REDACTED]>, Tyler Kahdeman <[REDACTED]>, Meagan Carmichael <[REDACTED]>, Sarah Black <[REDACTED]>, Dave Lundy <[REDACTED]>, Nicole Boomgaarden <[REDACTED]>, Deborah Whalen <[REDACTED]>, Samantha Weber <[REDACTED]>, Tiffany Myers <[REDACTED]>, Marna Bolger <[REDACTED]>, Susie Walton <[REDACTED]>, Mandy Pekin <[REDACTED]>, Malaika Myers <[REDACTED]>, Christine Montaquila <[REDACTED]>, Okka Alberts <[REDACTED]>, Molly Regan <[REDACTED]>, Jen <[REDACTED]>, Peggy <[REDACTED]>, Johanna Danz <[REDACTED]>, Kristen DeNicolo <[REDACTED]>, Guryan <[REDACTED]>, Amy oseland <[REDACTED]>, Abigail Karasick <[REDACTED]>, Shannon Lee <[REDACTED]>, Lisa Acker <[REDACTED]>, Sara Lapidus <[REDACTED]>, Jeanne Tromp <[REDACTED]>, Anna Veluz-Wilkins <[REDACTED]>, Laura Werling <[REDACTED]>, kristina ingrid olsen <[REDACTED]>, Jessy Ferdman <[REDACTED]>, Denise Schneider <[REDACTED]>, David Ouyang <[REDACTED]>, Lisa Oldson <[REDACTED]>, Suzanne Day <[REDACTED]>, Traci Knudson <[REDACTED]>, Liz Gmail <[REDACTED]>, CeCe Gobdel <[REDACTED]>, "(James) Harrison" <[REDACTED]>, Sarah Fox <[REDACTED]>, Erika Hlavacek <[REDACTED]>, Jennifer Campbell <[REDACTED]>, Julie Tag <[REDACTED]>, Kim Simon <[REDACTED]>, Jennifer Jacobsen <[REDACTED]>, Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]>, SHOSHANA BUCHHOLZ MILLER <[REDACTED]>, jessica eliscu <[REDACTED]>, Melissa Fenwick <[REDACTED]>, Maggie Burton <[REDACTED]>, Bertha Flores Moreno <[REDACTED]>, Julie Rakay <[REDACTED]>, Jane Tomlinson <[REDACTED]>, Kersten Tatarelis <[REDACTED]>, Inger Tanderup <[REDACTED]>, Beata Kirr <[REDACTED]>, Michelle Flood <[REDACTED]>, Vanessa Marti <[REDACTED]>

Dear Lisa,

Thanks very much for your reply. Since last Friday, a few additional parents have reached out and asked to be included as signatories. Below is an updated version of the letter, which includes the additional signatories.

Kind regards,
Maja

Dear D39 Board of Education:

Thank you for agreeing to extend the Safeguard screening program by 2 weeks, through the end of April. We are aware this decision was not made lightly and has an impact on administrative time and resources.

We are now writing to ask that you maintain Safeguard or another screening program **through the end of the school year, with no pause in screening**. Starting in the second week of the 4th quarter, the distance between students will decrease and class size will increase. With these changes, a screening program will only become *more* important and will allow us to finish out the year with appropriate safety measures in place. It will also help keep our kids in school by limiting lengthy quarantines. Extending the program until the end of April gives us only 2 weeks to see the impact of our decreased mitigations. To properly assess the transition, it would be most beneficial to extend the program through the end of the school year, which would only entail adding on 6 more weeks to the current screening schedule. It is important to start planning for this now, to give both the vendor and the administration sufficient time to prepare for D39's continued participation in the program.

After hearing the discussion regarding Safeguard at the last Board meeting, we thought it would be helpful to clarify a few points that were discussed at the meeting.

First, Safeguard is a **screening tool**.

- Safeguard is **not a diagnostic test**. It is in no way comparable to PCR testing in function or purpose.
- Safeguard provides the benefit of screening out an asymptomatic individual **before** they enter school. A PCR test verifies someone is positive after they have been notified of exposure or developed symptoms.
- We are clarifying this point because during the meeting, one of the Board members said, "PCR appears to be the better test." Additionally, it was repeatedly stated at the meeting that resources will be redirected from Safeguard to increasing access to PCR tests.

The Board expressed a concern that the screening has been seen by some families as an "all clear" to engage in other activities that lack safety mitigations such as masking, distancing, etc. The best way to ensure proper use of the screening is for the District to emphasize to families that a negative screening result is *not* the same as a negative result from a diagnostic test. For example, an x-ray is a diagnostic test; it says, "you have a broken arm" or "you do not have a broken arm." The screening program works differently: it is meant to work in conjunction with other mitigation strategies, such as masking and social distancing, to prevent Covid transmission within schools. This is analogous to the "Swiss cheese model": the more mitigations you layer on, the less chance there is that transmission will occur (because each hole of the Swiss cheese is covered by another layer). Rather than taking away the screening program, when so many families place tremendous value on this critical mitigation layer, the District

should consistently and clearly provide families with this additional information about the purpose of the screening.

Another point that was brought up as a concern about continuing with Safeguard was allocation of resources. On several occasions during the meeting, it was stated that resources would be redirected to additional lunch supervision and access to PCR tests. As explained above, PCR tests serve an entirely different purpose and are in no way a substitute for a screening program. Moreover, PCR tests are now widely available, and often at no cost to the patient. On the other hand, if Safeguard is discontinued, what screening tool will be available to our students? There has not yet been a discussion of a replacement screening program for our school community. Also, it is unclear to us why we cannot maintain both sufficient lunch supervision and a screening program. Many parents have volunteered to help put together saliva-screening kits and would be willing to help in other ways as well. And half of all saliva screening has been funded by the families themselves. Certainly, the Wilmette School District can ensure its students have access to both a screening program, which keeps them safe and in school, and lunch supervision.

The Board raised a concern about the value of Safeguard, because it has only identified “a few cases.” The value is clear: Safeguard identified 6 cases before the students entered school for the week, and that number might have been significantly greater if participation in the program had been higher. Even identifying 1 or 2 positive cases before they enter school holds great value. The touchpoints of a positive COVID case become exponential.

Finally, if there are concerns by the administration, the Board, or any subcommittees about whether this screening is performing accurately, several questions must be addressed prior to any decision to discontinue the program, and the findings must be communicated in a transparent way to the community.

(1) What analysis has been done to measure the impact on the program of consistently low participation rates (only slightly above 50%) and possible bias between the participating and nonparticipating groups?

(2) Are the many other schools (including New Trier) that use this screening having the same concerns and planning to discontinue the program?

(3) Data was collected in an environment that will look completely different in the 4th quarter (less distancing, more kids, new variants). Is it appropriate to extrapolate the results from an environment that looked nothing like the one we will have in the 4th quarter?

After these questions have been answered, if concerns persist, the district should explore other screening programs, and not just do away with screening altogether. Our school community has clearly voiced that it wants a screening program, and the CDC is now [publicly recommending](#) screening programs as a critical component of a safe and robust full-time school reopening. Furthermore, if the district does choose to transition to a different screening program, it is imperative that there not be a gap in screening offered at D39.

Once again, thank you for your partnership and consideration of the support for a screening program at D39 demonstrated by the 184 parents who have signed below.

Maja Kos
Rebecca and Jon Guryan
Abby and Steve Karasick
Lauri and Doug Fisher
Mike and Amy Oseland

Nicholas Butovich
Robyn and Andy Schaefer
Laura Fisher
Denise and Marty Kenny
Claire and Mitch Hoppenworth
Meg and Tyler Kahdeman
Meagan and Steve Carmichael
Sarah Black
Dave Lundy and Jen Jobrack
Ted and Michele Epps
Nicole Boomgarden
Deborah and James Whalen
Samantha Weber
Mike and Tiffany Myers
John and Marna Bolger
Susan and Tony Walton
Billy and Mandy Pekin
Malaika Myers
Christine Montaquila and Brad Williams
Okka Alberts and Wolfram Lackner
Molly and Jim Regan
Jen and Bill Truskowski
Marjorie Steadman-Shaw
Johanna and Jason Danz
Kristen DeNicolo
Marnie VanderVoort
Victoria Berry
Casey and David Brown
Christine Ferdinand
Michael and Nancy Himmelfarb
Diana Harr
Theia Friestedt
Alesha and Christophe Romatier
Meg Gieselman
Shannon Lee
Jennifer Nelson
Lisa Acker
Melissa and Chris Meers
Sara and David Lapidus
Jeanne Tromp
Anna and John Wilkins
Emily and Steve Zivin
Laura and Krist Werling
Christine and Pat Quinn
Jessy and Bobby Ferdman
Kristina Olsen and Sidney Regalado
Wataru and Noriko Yasohama
Laurey and Chris Tussing
Denise and Bret Schneider
Aimee and Tyler Koski
Kim and Dave Ouyang

Lynne Abbott
Lisa Oldson
Suzanne and Brian Day
Karli Bertocchi
Arielle Heneghan
Jen Suplee
Nancy Dolan and Dan Levine
Traci Knudson
Elizabeth and Ronnen Belkind
Niamh Whelan and Scott Reiter
Terri and Doug Fischer
Elizabeth and Michael Clarke
Amy and Brian Hague
Georgia Argionis
Cece and Evan Gobdel
Karen and George Rafeedie
Amanda and Jeff Doblin
Lucy and Bob Burne
Amy and Steve Weir
Sarah and Peter Hepner
Christi Harrison
Lisa Gold and Gregg Fisher
Sarah Fox
Erika and Jeff Hlavacek
Genny Mills
Michele Gili Sherman and Alan Mater
Valerie Tynkov
Laura Austin
Marjie Murphy
Silvia Fernandez
John and Elizabeth Dischner
Jen and Mark Campolieto
Julie Shayman Tag
Kim and Eric Simon
Stacy Flanigan
Jennifer Jacobsen
Jodi and Howard Soriano
Laura and Micah Hammer
Victor and Shoshana Miller
Jessica Eliscu
Melissa Fenwick
Maggie Burton
Carolyn and Jon Gilbert
Bertha Flores Moreno and Felipe Jimenez
Kim and Matt Peters
Julie Rakay
Michele and Chris Oh
Svetlana and Donald Chae
Jane and Joe Tomlinson
Kelly and Andy Warner
Kersten and Neal Tatarelis

Inger T. Klixbull
Juliet and Russell Kelso
Beata and Erich Kirr
Michelle Flood
Vanessa Heftman
Margie Karabas
Stephanie Crocker

From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Fwd: Kids now 65% of Wilmette's COVID-19 cases
Date: April 19, 2021 at 3:38:24 PM CDT
To: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

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

From: Jeff Axelrod <[REDACTED]>
Date: Mon, Apr 19, 2021 at 11:27 AM
Subject: Kids now 65% of Wilmette's COVID-19 cases
To: <fabesl@wilmette39.org>

Lisa:

Wilmette has been a red-zone hotspot over the past few weeks, which [Harvard Global Health Institute describes](#) as: "Jurisdictions have reached a tipping point for uncontrolled spread and will require the use of stay-at-home orders to mitigate the disease." The overwhelming majority of these cases has been from children age 19 and under.

Over the past seven days of data, 65% of new COVID-19 cases in Wilmette have been children. However, they only constitute 30% of Wilmette's population. And over the past 14 days, 55% of new cases have been kids.

[18% of people tested in Region 10](#) are reporting positive, and rising. The FDA-unapproved saliva test that the district is using [appears to be missing the vast majority of positive cases](#).

I assume you are aware that despite the language used by the district in emails, contact tracing for virtually all of the cases fails to determine where the cases were contracted. The best data we do have shows that schools are [by far the most likely location for potential exposure to the coronavirus](#).

Eliminating six-foot social distancing and admitting new in-person students [will likely have proven to be problematic](#), especially as variants are becoming the dominant strain, and cases among children in Wilmette have become overwhelmingly disproportionate. It's not too late to start moving in the more precautionary direction.

Sincerely,
Jeff Axelrod

Rebecca Guryan <[REDACTED]>

Mon, Apr 19, 10:06 PM (9 hours ago)

to me, Kate, cremasck, jacksonk

To the D39 Board of Education, Dr. Cremascoli, Principal Dominique and Principal Jackson:

At the BOE Committee of the Whole Meeting, which was held today, Monday, April 19, 2021, Dr. Cremascoli discussed the importance of keeping up with our safety habits, especially since there has been an uptick in Covid cases in our community, New Trier Township, and teacher zip codes. Dr. Cremascoli also talked about how we have decreased some safety mitigations at the same time as we have increased class size in both WHJS and HMS.

At the meeting, Lauri Fischer posed the following question to this group: Does District 39 consider identifying asymptomatic Covid cases before they enter the school building a top priority? Although her question went unanswered due to the format of the meeting, I felt that it was important to remind you that nearly 200 parents recently signed a letter asking for a saliva-based screening to remain in place until the end of the school year at D39. This is proof that many in our community feel it is a top priority. Parents continue to reach out asking that their names be added to this letter. At the March Board Meeting, one of the members stated that they only saw a saliva-based program as valuable if it caught 4-6 cases a week, and that if it doesn't catch any cases, then the program is worthless and resources are better allocated elsewhere.

I disagree with that statement, as do over 200 other members of our community. Having approximately 800 students in each of the HMS and WJHS buildings is a lot of students; it is close to what NTHS West Campus holds. When I see that NTHS is only catching 2-4 cases in a week, I do not think of this as a failure of the screening program. Rather, I am relieved. Because the screening is mandatory and participation rates are high, this means that mitigations are working and community spread is low. Knowing that gives me comfort as a parent and a member of the community. When I see 4-6 cases being caught at HMS or WJHS (as was the case over the past two weeks), I am concerned, because participation rates are so low, which means there must be more asymptomatic cases in the building and our safety mitigations are not foolproof. Many in the community are asking for continued screening and that opinion should be valued and respected by those who serve the greater community.

Finally, I understand that a decision regarding the continuation of Safeguard or another saliva-based screening will be happening at the April 26 board meeting, which is the same day as the last scheduled saliva collection. I feel it is important to make sure you are aware that according to Dr. Cremascoli, a two-week turnaround is necessary in order to alert the vendor and get the next batch of testing supplies ordered and distributed to the families. Should the BOE and Administration wait until April 26 to make this decision, this means there will be a gap in the screening program, which could easily have been avoided. Such a gap in screening could have dire consequences as students under 16 are not eligible for the vaccine, and many of the parents in the community will not yet be fully vaccinated. Please take this into consideration when planning for next steps.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Guryan

From: Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Request for reconsideration of full in person attendance at WJHS

Date: April 19, 2021 at 11:14:04 PM CDT

To: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>

Cc: stonee@wilmette39.org, cesareti@wilmette39.org, "panzicaf@wilmette39.org" <panzicaf@wilmette39.org>, poehlinga@wilmette39.org, steenm@wilmette39.org, sternwee@wilmette39.org, Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, [REDACTED], Bonnie Kim <[REDACTED]>

Dear District 39 Board of Education:

Thank you for your service to our school community during challenging times. While I can understand the many factors that likely prompted your decision to return WJHS students to full in person attendance for 4th quarter, I would like to respectfully ask that the Board reconsider this decision.

Following the first day of full in person attendance, my daughter was identified as a close contact to a student who tested positive — my understanding is that the saliva screening flagged this student and subsequent PCR testing confirmed COVID. With this positive case and others last week, entire home rooms are in quarantine and several other kids who were not in the same homeroom but had other exposure, are out of school — many having to learn independently as their homerooms are not in quarantine.

While we were initially informed that my daughter could return to school on 4/21 — 10 days after her exposure, today we were informed that she will have to remain out of school until 4/27 which will be over 14 days from her exposure. Upon questioning the basis for this change we were told that it's required under CCPHD guidelines because students are not at least 6 feet apart in school.

If we cannot space our students sufficiently to avoid large scale quarantines, this push for full time in person learning is "full time in person" in name only. When we have dozens of kids forced to learn on their own at home, we have hardly achieved the objective of in person learning. To the contrary, we likely are decreasing the amount of in person learning being provided to the junior high community and potentially exacerbating mental and emotional health challenges that even the most well-adjusted kids have faced during the last year.

It's commonly understood that consistency and established routines are key to emotional and mental health and good learning habits. Quarantines and the uncertainty associated with the risks of repeated quarantines in classrooms at full capacity undermines the ultimate goal of our schools which I believe is providing quality education. The current set up seems to prioritize the headline of returning to "full time" while actually undermining the ability of the school to provide quality education to the students. We now are leaving many kids to teach themselves or have sporadic contact with any teacher for two-week stretches.

In addition, with the lengthy quarantine period being applied to entire classes regardless of actual close contact (which does not seem to be consistent with current CDC guidelines and which seems to ignore the benefits of mask wearing and the data on low rates of school spread in other locales where it has been studied), I am concerned that we are also incentivizing parents to stop being forthright about possible illness and exposure, and likely to stop participating in saliva screening to seek to avoid excessive quarantines.

I know that the return to full time voices were loud in our community and I certainly would love nothing more than a return to full time school for my 8th grader. But the bottom line is that we can't both adhere to current public health department guidelines and maintain consistent full time in person classes. All it takes is one case to send 25+ kids into quarantine for two weeks. If we return to A/B cohorts, adequate distancing is possible and fewer kids are impacted by a positive case.

Finally, if returning to A/B cohorts is not possible, I would encourage the Board to implement a remote Monday to allow saliva screening to be processed before we put all of the kids in the not adequately distanced class together. Certainly there will still be cases that are discovered later in the week but at least we would allow the benefit of the screening to be realized before it's too late to stop some exposure.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Laura Fisher

From: Evita Vulgaris [REDACTED]
Subject: Board responses to Written Communication
Date: April 20, 2021 at 7:43 PM
To: Board Board board@wilmette39.org



District 39 Board:

I have looked through the Board of Education meetings' Written Communication for previous years and one thing that struck me is that all emails sent to the Board were answered promptly, many of them directly by Dr. Lechner. His responses both to me and others were not just acknowledgements but thoughtful and meaningful replies.

In contrast, now, most emails sent to the Board do not get answered or at least not in a public forum. From my own experience, in the last few months, I have written several fact-based emails to the Board to which I have received no response. Although only a small percentage of the community actually writes, many others have the same thoughts and questions.

Does the Board not view this two-way communication as important anymore? If it really values multiple viewpoints that come not only from its Board members but from community members that take the time to write and listen to its meetings, I would think that responding in a written and public forum would be deemed important. Otherwise, community members will lose interest.

Thank you,
Evita Vulgaris

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.

From: Maja Kos <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Re: Suggestions for Improving the Saliva-Screening Program at D39

Date: April 22, 2021 at 1:11:39 PM CDT

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

Cc: Bonnie Kim <[REDACTED]>

Dear Dr. Cremascoli and D39 Board of Education,

I am writing to follow up on my 4/13 email (see below), since I have not yet heard back from you.

Please review my suggestions for optimizing the saliva-screening program at D39, making it mandatory (with exceptions) at the 5–8 level, and minimizing the number of necessary quarantines—which has dramatically increased at 5–8 since the start of full-time in-person instruction and decreased distancing between students.

In summary, I would like to recommend that the following changes be implemented immediately to ensure our kids are able to learn in a safer environment and avoid lengthy quarantines as much as possible:

–**Extend the screening program at D39 through the end of the school year.**

–**Change Monday instruction to synchronous remote instruction at the 5–8 level** to allow for the saliva samples to be processed and as many asymptomatic/pre-symptomatic cases to be identified **before** the students enter the school building—thereby minimizing the need for class/individual quarantines.

–**Implement mandatory screening at 5–8.** The following suggestions would help facilitate this move: give each student one grace day (week) if they forget to submit a sample in a given week; allow families who forget to submit a saliva sample to submit a negative rapid PCR or antigen test result for a quicker return to school; allow families with unique, legitimate concerns to be excused from the participation requirement. Mandatory screening, coupled with remote instruction on Mondays, would significantly reduce necessary quarantines.

Since, at the March 22 board meeting, the mandatory participation at 5–8 was quickly dismissed as not feasible—due to D39's setup being different from New Trier's in that classes are not livestreamed via Zoom and synchronous instruction is not available to those who simply don't wish to participate—I would like to ask you to consider those students who do participate and then have to quarantine (and even learn independently if they are quarantining separately from their homeroom) because someone who didn't wish to participate brought Covid into their class? The lack of livestreamed instruction actually makes it even more imperative for the screening to be mandatory, so that as many independent quarantines (which amount to students completing 2 weeks of makeup work) as possible can be avoided.

Finally, it appears [federal funding is now available for the SafeGuard screening program](#). This should further facilitate maintaining and strengthening the program at D39.

I would appreciate a response that addresses all of the points I have raised here (and in my 4/13 email) and all of the suggestions I have provided.

Kind regards,

Maja Kos (mother of a WJHS 7th grader)

On Tue, Apr 13, 2021 at 2:34 PM Maja Kos <[REDACTED]> wrote:
Dear Dr. Cremascoli and D39 BOE,

Thank you for all of your efforts to bring our children back to school five days per week. I am writing to offer some suggestions to make this transition even more successful, as I believe it is important to continue to make adjustments and optimize processes as we move through the last quarter of this academic year.

Specifically, I feel that a stronger saliva-screening program will help keep positive cases out of classrooms—where the number of students has increased and distancing has decreased—and limit necessary quarantines. These quarantines require 10 days (or perhaps 8, if the 10 days include a weekend) of remote synchronous school or 10 days of asynchronous makeup work, when only some students in a class are required to quarantine. This latter scenario might happen, for example, if a student is exposed to a positive case in accelerated math and as a result has to quarantine, while the rest of his homeroom continues learning in person.

On March 19, we sent a letter signed by numerous parents asking for the saliva-screening program to be made mandatory at the 5–8 level. We also provided a number of possible solutions to facilitate a move to mandatory participation. These solutions included adding a mid-week drop-off day or giving each student one grace day (or rather, week) if they forgot to submit a sample in a given week. Another proposed solution was to allow families who forgot to submit a saliva sample to submit a negative rapid PCR or antigen test result for a quicker return to school. We also suggested that the district could allow families with unique, legitimate concerns to be excused from the participation requirement.

At the last board meeting, the mandatory-participation issue—which had been requested by so many D39 parents—was barely even mentioned. It was quickly dismissed as not feasible due to D39's setup being different from New Trier's in that classes are not livestreamed via Zoom. I am hoping you will reconsider this mandatory component, as it is so important to making the screening program most effective. Could you please explore the above suggestions for facilitating mandatory participation and provide the community with a response to each of the proposed solutions?

Finally, another issue has come up in this first week of full-time in-person instruction: the saliva-sample collection takes place on Monday morning, so the samples cannot be processed before the students attend school. This means that once cases are identified through the screening, all exposed classes have to begin their quarantine. Would it be possible to either 1) have synchronous remote instruction on Mondays to allow for the samples to be processed *before* the children go to school (one synchronous day per week seems much better than 10 straight days of quarantine, potentially with asynchronous makeup work) or 2) move the sample collection to Fridays, so quarantines can include two weekends rather than one, thereby decreasing the necessary number of missed in-person days?

Thank you very much for taking these points into consideration.

Kind regards,
Maja Kos (mother of a WJHS 7th grader)

From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>

Subject: Fwd: District 39 Reopening

Date: April 22, 2021 at 1:11:41 PM CDT

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Good afternoon Ms. Cox,

Thank you for your email. I am sorry you are disappointed in the direction D39 has taken, but I understand your concerns.

Since the pandemic started, the Board has prioritized maximizing in person instruction to the fullest extent possible. Moving to 5 days per week is consistent with that belief. Note too, that total cases are going down, and risk overall is going down. Moving to 5-days a week was made possible and in accordance with the revised guidance from the CDC and the IDPH earlier this spring.

We are doing all that we can to prioritize health and safety, which includes the mental, physical and educational health of our students, and will continue to evaluate opportunities for improvement. Unfortunately, with 5-days of instructional programming and reduced distancing within homerooms, if a case is identified there is a likelihood that a classroom quarantine may need to occur. We all hope to avoid this as much as possible and call upon our community for their support in accomplishing this. The number of classrooms on quarantine is small. Currently 6 classes district-wide - a small percentage of classrooms overall. When classes are in quarantine, daily synchronous instruction occurs.

We do not have the infrastructure to make Safeguard screening mandatory, but it's likely to continue through the end of the school year. It is one of many mitigation strategies we employ.

Regarding quarantines, we are required to follow the directives and quarantine orders of the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH). Quarantines help to isolate cases, limit exposure and reduce spread. Unfortunately, with increased students attending in-person school daily and reduced distancing within homerooms, when a case is identified among students the CCDPH directs quarantines for 14 days for the homeroom where potential close contact may have occurred. Because distancing is reduced to less than 6 feet within homeroom pods, 14-days is required by the CCDPH. While we are working hard to increase in-person instruction safely, we must adhere to the guidelines and recommendations of the CCDPH. Unfortunately, this includes quarantines when a case is identified. We, like you, hope to avoid classroom quarantines as much as possible and recognize the importance of everyone working together to help reduce exposure and spread of this virus to accomplish this goal.

I hope this helps answer your questions.

Lisa

On Wed, Apr 21, 2021 at 8:18 PM <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear All,

I had previously emailed Kate and received nothing more than a canned response. There are many other parents that share the same concerns I do:

1. I don't understand how the decision was made to transition to 5 days IF that meant every time a kid tests positive, the ENTIRE homeroom stays home for 2 solid weeks.
2. If the above was the consensus and the best course of action based on numerous factors, then why are screening tests not mandatory to minimize positive cases? Much more should have and could have been done to prevent as many infected kids as possible from attending school in-person.
3. Why can't the affected homeroom take a PCR test and be allowed back in the classroom if negative?

So many other questions but based on my conversations with other parents, we do not understand how the transition to 5 days made any sense, given these circumstances / downsides. Perhaps would have worked with some additional measures in place but they do not seem to have been seriously considered and certainly not implemented. Given that no additional safety measures were being put in place, keeping a hybrid schedule seemed to be the only logical solution. Very disappointed by these decisions.

Best regards,

Lisa

Lisa Cox



Re: Suggestions for Improving the Saliva-Screening Program at D39

1 message

Maja Kos <[REDACTED]>

Thu, Apr 22, 2021 at 11:11 PM

To: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, board@wilmette39.org, Bonnie Kim <[REDACTED]>, [REDACTED]

Hello Lisa,

Thanks very much for your reply.

While it is true that exposure and case identification can occur any day of the week, and that some quarantines may be inevitable, remote Mondays would serve to *significantly reduce* the need for quarantines. Many of the cases identified later in the week might have been identified on Monday if those individuals had participated in the screening. Not all, but many. And if we could avoid even a fraction of the current class and individual quarantines, the investment in the screening would certainly be worth it.

When I mention investment, I am not referring to financial investment, because, as I noted in my email, [schools can now receive federal funding for the Safeguard screening](#). Also, you cite the "small number of cases identified from Safeguard since the program began." I would just like to stress again that you can't identify cases if people don't participate (they would participate, however, if the screening were mandatory). The "small number" is most likely due to low participation. Even with such low participation (around 50%), Safeguard has identified 7 cases since spring break. We were lucky that the first 4 were identified on a remote Monday, which ensured that those 4 homerooms plus other contacts did not have to quarantine. Again, 7 cases have been identified in 3 weeks. If Safeguard identifies 7 cases in 3 weeks with 50% participation, consider how many cases it might identify with participation closer to 100%— and how many students would be spared from having to quarantine for 14 days.

Finally, I am not sure I understand how the district does not have the infrastructure to implement mandatory screening. The district made the screening available to *all* students. This means that the district must have planned for the possibility that most students would participate. In fact, over 80% of students have registered to participate (and have received their kits); many have unfortunately not followed through and submitted samples. But if all registered students were to submit their samples next Monday, would the district not be able to accommodate them? Was the district counting on people not participating? Note that mandatory participation at 5–8 (with some exceptions) would not result in a significantly higher percentage of in-person D39 students scheduled to participate (since participation would not be mandatory at K-4). Mandatory participation at 5–8 could very well result in an overall D39 participation rate of around 80%.

I hope that continued screening at D39, mandatory screening at 5–8, and remote Mondays at 5–8 will be seriously considered by the district and BOE.

Thank you again for your reply and consideration,
Maja

On Thu, Apr 22, 2021 at 9:18 PM Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org> wrote:

Good afternoon Maja,

Thank you for your on-going advocacy for the Safeguard Screening program. We read all your emails and consider all your suggestions.

The issue of continuing Safeguard through the end of the year will be discussed at the April board meeting.

Regarding shifting back to fully remote Mondays, because exposure and case identification can occur any day of the week, providing an additional day of fully remote instruction may not achieve the goal of more consistent in-person instruction overall. That said, we will continue to closely monitor cases and quarantines, as well as opportunities for improvement. We, like you, hope to avoid classroom quarantines as much as possible and recognize the importance of everyone working together to help reduce exposure and spread of this virus to accomplish this goal.

Regarding mandatory screening, we do not have the infrastructure to implement it. Given the small number of cases identified from Safeguard since the program began, and the investment in terms of dollars, technology and people hours required to implement a mandatory program, the District will keep the program voluntary.

Best regards,

Lisa

On Thu, Apr 22, 2021 at 1:11 PM Maja Kos <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Dr. Cremascoli and D39 Board of Education,

I am writing to follow up on my 4/13 email (see below), since I have not yet heard back from you.

Please review my suggestions for optimizing the saliva-screening program at D39, making it mandatory (with exceptions) at the 5–8 level, and minimizing the number of necessary quarantines—which has dramatically increased at 5–8 since the start of full-time in-person instruction and decreased distancing between students.

In summary, I would like to recommend that the following changes be implemented immediately to ensure our kids are able to learn in a safer environment and avoid lengthy quarantines as much as possible:

–**Extend the screening program at D39 through the end of the school year.**

–**Change Monday instruction to synchronous remote instruction at the 5–8 level** to allow for the saliva samples to be processed and as many asymptomatic/pre-symptomatic cases to be identified *before* the students enter the school building—thereby minimizing the need for class/individual quarantines.

–**Implement mandatory screening at 5–8.** The following suggestions would help facilitate this move: give each student one grace day (week) if they forget to submit a sample in a given week; allow families who forget to submit a saliva sample to submit a negative rapid PCR or antigen test result for a quicker return to school; allow families with unique, legitimate concerns to be excused from the participation requirement. Mandatory screening, coupled with remote instruction on Mondays, would significantly reduce necessary quarantines.

Since, at the March 22 board meeting, the mandatory participation at 5–8 was quickly dismissed as not feasible—due to D39's setup being different from New Trier's in that classes are not livestreamed via Zoom and synchronous instruction is not available to those who simply don't wish to participate—I would like to ask you to consider those students who do participate and then have to quarantine (and even learn independently if they are quarantining separately from their homeroom) because someone who didn't wish to participate brought Covid into their class? The lack of livestreamed instruction actually makes it even more imperative for the screening to be mandatory, so that as many independent quarantines (which amount to students completing 2 weeks of makeup work) as possible can be avoided.

Finally, it appears [federal funding is now available for the SafeGuard screening program](#). This should further facilitate maintaining and strengthening the program at D39.

I would appreciate a response that addresses all of the points I have raised here (and in my 4/13 email) and all of the suggestions I have provided.

Kind regards,

Maja Kos (mother of a WJHS 7th grader)

On Tue, Apr 13, 2021 at 2:34 PM Maja Kos <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Dr. Cremascoli and D39 BOE,

Thank you for all of your efforts to bring our children back to school five days per week. I am writing to offer

some suggestions to make this transition even more successful, as I believe it is important to continue to make adjustments and optimize processes as we move through the last quarter of this academic year.

Specifically, I feel that a stronger saliva-screening program will help keep positive cases out of classrooms—where the number of students has increased and distancing has decreased—and limit necessary quarantines. These quarantines require 10 days (or perhaps 8, if the 10 days include a weekend) of remote synchronous school or 10 days of asynchronous makeup work, when only some students in a class are required to quarantine. This latter scenario might happen, for example, if a student is exposed to a positive case in accelerated math and as a result has to quarantine, while the rest of his homeroom continues learning in person.

On March 19, we sent a letter signed by numerous parents asking for the saliva-screening program to be made mandatory at the 5–8 level. We also provided a number of possible solutions to facilitate a move to mandatory participation. These solutions included adding a mid-week drop-off day or giving each student one grace day (or rather, week) if they forgot to submit a sample in a given week. Another proposed solution was to allow families who forgot to submit a saliva sample to submit a negative rapid PCR or antigen test result for a quicker return to school. We also suggested that the district could allow families with unique, legitimate concerns to be excused from the participation requirement.

At the last board meeting, the mandatory-participation issue—which had been requested by so many D39 parents—was barely even mentioned. It was quickly dismissed as not feasible due to D39's setup being different from New Trier's in that classes are not livestreamed via Zoom. I am hoping you will reconsider this mandatory component, as it is so important to making the screening program most effective. Could you please explore the above suggestions for facilitating mandatory participation and provide the community with a response to each of the proposed solutions?

Finally, another issue has come up in this first week of full-time in-person instruction: the saliva-sample collection takes place on Monday morning, so the samples cannot be processed before the students attend school. This means that once cases are identified through the screening, all exposed classes have to begin their quarantine. Would it be possible to either 1) have synchronous remote instruction on Mondays to allow for the samples to be processed *before* the children go to school (one synchronous day per week seems much better than 10 straight days of quarantine, potentially with asynchronous makeup work) or 2) move the sample collection to Fridays, so quarantines can include two weekends rather than one, thereby decreasing the necessary number of missed in-person days?

Thank you very much for taking these points into consideration.

Kind regards,
Maja Kos (mother of a WJHS 7th grader)

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.

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.

From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Suggestions to limit asymptomatic cases in school
Date: April 24, 2021 at 10:11:04 AM CDT
To: Abby Karasick <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Good morning Abby and Steve,

The District shares your desire to see a positive finish for everyone in the D39 community.

While I appreciate your on-going advocacy, we see the issues around Safeguard screening differently.

While we can encourage families to pick the Sunday drop off option, we are going to stay the course with in-person instruction on Mondays. Exposure and case identification can occur any day of the week, providing an additional day of fully remote instruction may not achieve the goal of more consistent in-person instruction overall. That said, we will continue to closely monitor cases and quarantines, as well as opportunities for improvement. We, like you, hope to avoid classroom quarantines as much as possible and recognize the importance of everyone working together to help reduce exposure and spread of this virus to accomplish this goal.

We are not going to implement mandatory screening in D39. There are legal, logistical, operational and technological changes that would be required to make screening mandatory. While we have the capacity to process the samples, we do not have the capacity to process missing samples and then enforce and exclude students who do not turn in their sample. In addition, the board does not have the desire to exclude students from attending school who are otherwise healthy, without symptoms and known exposure.

Best,

Lisa

On Fri, Apr 23, 2021 at 5:23 PM Abby Karasick <[REDACTED]> wrote:
Dear Dr. Cremascoli and D39 Board of Education,

With just a few weeks left until summer break, we'd love to see all the kids in District 39 have a positive finish to this challenging school year. While we are pleased that District students have been back in school every day over the past three weeks, we are all aware that having positive Covid cases in school is posing a real threat to this goal.

We believe the following suggestions will help address this problem:

1. We were pleased to learn today that the District is partnering with New Trier to add a Sunday a.m. saliva drop off, which can be processed by Sunday evening. We recommend that the District send a separate communication to families that states: "This is now the **strongly preferred** saliva drop off window (Sunday 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.) so that results can be obtained by Sunday night. This way, any families whose results require a follow-up PCR test will not send their child to school on Monday morning. This helps keep potential Covid cases out of school".

If the majority of samples are not getting processed by Sunday evenings, you should consider making Monday a synchronous remote instruction day for grades 5-8. This will allow for the saliva samples to be processed and for as many asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic cases to be identified **before** students enter the school building, which could minimize the need for class and individual quarantines. To be clear, we know that exposure and case identification can occur throughout the week and therefore screening only one day a week may not be sufficient to find every case. But it would certainly help minimize the number of positive cases in school and potentially, the number of classes quarantined.

2. Make Safeguard screening mandatory for all students in grades 5-8:

- Though the Board stated at the last Board meeting on March 22 that only a small number of cases have been identified by Safeguard since the program began, participation in the program has been consistently and extremely low, around 50%. It's likely that more cases would certainly be picked up if participation was closer to 100%. The need for making screening mandatory becomes even more critical if we consider that there may indeed be differences between the group that does not participate and the group that does participate.
- Some board members have expressed concerns regarding the resources and time required to run a mandated screening program. Cross-referencing a list of participating students against a school roster, and emailing parents by late Sunday or by Monday afternoon if a student did not participate, does not seem like an undue burden. It appears that the U.S. Department of Education has informed the State of Illinois that school districts are allowed to purchase Safeguard saliva screening using Federal Coronavirus grants (*Illinois Drops Policy Blocking Schools From Covid-19 Test Funding, Patch, April 21, 2021*). Also, 50% of families are funding screening for themselves and other students.
- To facilitate mandatory implementation, exceptions could be made where appropriate, including: giving each student one grace day/grace week if they forget to submit a sample in a given week; allowing families who forget to submit a saliva sample to submit a negative rapid PCR test result for a quicker return to school; adding an additional saliva sample drop-off day (assuming that you can use New Trier's intra-week processing); and allowing families with unique, legitimate concerns to be excused from the participation requirement. If a family truly does not want to participate in screening, the fully remote option is available.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Abby and Steve Karasick

Hello Lisa,

Thank you for your reply. I agree that we see the issues around the Safeguard screening differently. But with at least 2 new classes under quarantine as of this weekend, I feel the dialogue needs to continue and this is the only channel I have for that dialogue.

I understand that a number of neighboring school districts have been able to successfully navigate the "legal, logistical, operational and technological changes" and implement mandatory screening to keep more Covid cases out of school and keep quarantines at bay. I am certain that if D39 spares no reasonable cost and effort, it can accomplish the same.

Further, you mentioned again that nonparticipating students would be excluded from in-person instruction, and that "the board does not have the desire to exclude students from attending school who are otherwise healthy, without symptoms and known exposure." I will again say that with the *optional* screening policy, the district is doing precisely what it claims it doesn't want to do: excluding so many healthy students from in-person instruction via quarantines. Many of these quarantined students may have been exposed to a positive asymptomatic/presymptomatic case in school that could have been screened out by mandatory screening. I understand that mandatory screening would not identify all cases of Covid in school. But it would certainly identify significantly more than it currently does with 50% participation. And that would already make a big difference.

As I hear of more and more cases of class and individual quarantines, I dread the possibility that my son could end up in the same situation—and perhaps more than once before the end of the school year. Since he attends French and Math class separately from his homeroom, the potential for exposure—and individual quarantine—is greater. If he were to end up in individual quarantine, as so many 5–8 students already have, he would be losing out not just on 2 weeks of in-person school, but also on 2 weeks of any type of school, really, because independent quarantine amounts to minimal, unstructured, and self-guided makeup work each day. There is no excuse for subjecting children to this level of exclusion. Why is the district putting forth greater effort to protect the in-person-school rights of students who may not want to participate in the screening than to protect those same rights of students who are willing to comply with any and all safety mitigations, including screening?

I do want to recognize that the district announced yesterday that it would be recommending a continuation of Safeguard until the end of the school year and that families can now drop off students' saliva samples before 2p on Sunday for processing by the end of the day. I was so pleased to hear these announcements and am very grateful the district has taken these steps to strengthen the screening program. Thank you to all who contributed to making these adjustments. I hope the district will take this even further by 1) communicating to families that the Sunday NT drop off is the *strongly preferred* drop-off, as it allows for the samples to be processed *before* students attend school the next day, and that the alternate Sun evening/Mon morning drop-offs should only be used when there is a significant conflict that precludes families from being able to drop off their samples on Sun at NT; and 2) making the screening mandatory at 5–8 (with flexibility and exceptions).

I was hoping you could also provide clarification around the 14-day quarantine period. Why is the district not implementing a 10-day quarantine period, which is cited by the CDC as an acceptable alternative when no symptoms are present and which has been instituted by other schools, such as Loyola Academy? This would be another improvement to the current policy, as it would shorten the time students are required to be away from in-person school and sometimes even from their homerooms.

Finally, is the district working to find ways to improve the educational experience for students who are being required to quarantine independently? Could they be given the option to Zoom into classes with another quarantining homeroom, especially if that homeroom is on the same Team as the student's homeroom? How is the district planning to maximize opportunities for these students to be able to Zoom into classes and participate in synchronous remote instruction as much as possible? The alternative—self-directed completion of minimal makeup work for two weeks—is simply unacceptable.

I would also like to make a request for more transparency regarding the students quarantines. Currently, we only receive a quarantine update once per week, in the metrics report, and this update only includes the number of homerooms currently quarantined and the total number of students currently quarantined. It would be helpful to receive more regular and detailed data on quarantines. Could the district provide daily updates regarding quarantines, as New Trier does on its metrics page? Could the district include how many classes are quarantined at each level (K-4, HMS, WJHS)? And most importantly, could the district specify how many of the quarantined students are being required to quarantine separately from their homeroom? This last group of students has been most adversely affected by the quarantines, and it would be helpful to know how prevalent these individual quarantines have been.

Again, I am grateful for the recent changes to the screening program. When I hear "this is final"—type phrasing, such as, the district will "stay the course" and "will not implement mandatory screening," I am discouraged that there is no opportunity for further dialogue on these issues and no willingness to make adjustments to current processes as things continue to develop and more information is brought to light. However, I was heartened to see that the district was in fact willing to make improvements to the screening program, and I hope it will continue to stay open to making further improvements that could lead to a more successful end to the school year for our children.

Kind regards,
Maja

Maja Kos (mother of a WJHS 7th grader)

From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Suggestions for Improving the Saliva-Screening Program at D39
Date: April 23, 2021 at 1:57:11 PM CDT
To: Maja Kos <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Hi Maja,

While I appreciate your on-going advocacy, we see the issues around Safeguard screening differently.

When I talk about resources, I am not just talking about money. I am talking about infrastructure required to go from screening to excluding students for failure to comply with a requirement for screening. There are legal, logistical, operational and technological changes that would be required. While we have the capacity to process the samples, we do not have the capacity to process missing samples and then enforce and exclude students who do not turn in their sample. In addition, the board does not have the desire to exclude students from attending school who are otherwise healthy, without symptoms and known exposure. We are not going to implement mandatory screening in D39.

In addition, as I stated in my previous email, we are going to stay the course with in-person instruction on Monday.

Best,

Lisa

On Thu, Apr 22, 2021 at 11:12 PM Maja Kos <[REDACTED]> wrote:
Hello Lisa,

Thanks very much for your reply.

While it is true that exposure and case identification can occur any day of the week, and that some quarantines may be inevitable, remote Mondays would serve to *significantly reduce* the need for quarantines. Many of the cases identified later in the week might have been identified on Monday if those individuals had participated in the screening. Not all, but many. And if we could avoid even a fraction of the current class and individual quarantines, the investment in the screening would certainly be worth it.

When I mention investment, I am not referring to financial investment, because, as I noted in my email, [schools can now receive federal funding for the Safeguard screening](#). Also, you cite the "small number of cases identified from Safeguard since the program began." I would just like to stress again that you can't identify cases if people don't participate (they would participate, however, if the screening were mandatory). The "small number" is most likely due to low participation. Even with such low participation (around 50%), Safeguard has identified 7 cases since spring break. We were lucky that the first 4 were identified on a remote Monday, which ensured that those 4 homerooms plus other contacts did not have to quarantine. Again, 7 cases have been identified in 3 weeks. If Safeguard identifies 7 cases in 3 weeks with 50% participation, consider how many cases it might identify with participation closer to 100%—and how many students would be spared from having to quarantine for 14 days.

Finally, I am not sure I understand how the district does not have the infrastructure to implement mandatory screening. The district made the screening available to *all* students. This means that the district must have planned for the possibility that most students would participate. In fact, over 80% of students have registered to participate (and have received their kits); many have unfortunately not followed through and submitted samples. But if all registered students were to submit their samples next Monday, would the district not be able to accommodate them? Was the district counting on people not participating? Note that mandatory participation at 5–8 (with some exceptions) would not result in a significantly higher percentage of in-person D39 students scheduled to participate (since participation would not be mandatory at K-4). Mandatory participation at 5–8 could very well result in an overall D39 participation rate of around 80%.

I hope that continued screening at D39, mandatory screening at 5–8, and remote Mondays at 5–8 will be seriously considered by the district and BOE.

Thank you again for your reply and consideration,
Maja

From: Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Request for reconsideration of full in person attendance at WJHS
Date: April 25, 2021 at 11:01:58 AM CDT
To: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, Bonnie Kim <[REDACTED]>, stonee@wilmette39.org, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, "panzicaf@wilmette39.org" <panzicaf@wilmette39.org>, poehlinga@wilmette39.org, steenm@wilmette39.org, [REDACTED]

Dear District 39 Board of Education:

I write to share this article regarding a recent peer reviewed study conducted by MIT researchers that seems to suggest that our myopic focus on social distancing parameters vs. air circulation and other mitigation strategies is misplaced. I hope that you will reassess the current approach which continues to leave large numbers of kids quarantined at home, some with access to teachers and some without, for the excessive duration of 14 days.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/23/mit-researchers-say-youre-no-safer-from-covid-indoors-at-6-feet-or-60-feet-in-new-study.html>

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Laura Fisher

[REDACTED]

From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Request for reconsideration of full in person attendance at WJHS
Date: April 22, 2021 at 1:06:40 PM CDT
To: Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Ms. Fisher,

I apologize, I confused you with Lauri Fisher - who spoke at the board committee meeting on Monday.

I am sorry you are disappointed in the direction D39 has taken, but I understand your concerns.

Since the pandemic started, the Board has prioritized maximizing in person instruction to the fullest extent possible. Moving to 5 days per week is consistent with that belief. Note too, that total cases are going down, and risk overall is going down. Moving to 5-days a week was made possible and in accordance with the revised guidance from the CDC and the IDPH earlier this spring.

We are doing all that we can to prioritize health and safety, which includes the mental, physical and educational health of our students, and will continue to evaluate opportunities for improvement. Unfortunately, with 5-days of instructional programming and reduced distancing within homerooms, if a case is identified there is a likelihood that a classroom quarantine may need to occur. We all hope to avoid this as much as possible and call upon our community for their support in accomplishing this.

There are 6 classrooms on quarantine currently - a small percentage of classrooms overall. When classes are in quarantine, daily synchronous instruction occurs. While there are no perfect scenarios when providing instruction during a pandemic, we do believe that maximizing in person instruction is important.

Best,

Lisa

On Apr 21, 2021, at 11:44 AM, Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hi

Just to clarify I was not at the committee meeting and didn't make any comments. Not sure who you are referring to.

I'd also like to stress that my objection to the District's full in person model under space constraints that apparently trigger the state department of public health quarantine rules is not about my daughter's "long quarantine".

It's bad education policy and stands in stark contradiction to the stated goal of full in person learning. 100s of kids in quarantine, many tasked with teaching themselves for two weeks, is not full in person learning.

We are failing our students under this model.

Sincerely,

Laura Fisher

On Apr 21, 2021, at 11:32 AM, Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org> wrote:

Good morning Laura,

Thank you for your email and comments at the committee meeting.

I am sorry to hear your daughter has had a long quarantine. As a mother with direct experience with this, I know it is hard for all.

As Dr. Cremascoli shared, we will continue to watch cases and quaretines and pivot if necessary. But at this point, we are staying the course.

Be well,

Lisa

On Tue, Apr 20, 2021 at 12:47 PM Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org> wrote:

Dear Laura,

Thank you for your ongoing advocacy, support and ideas. We appreciate your engagement and feedback.

Regarding quarantines, there are occasions when the Health Department clarifies quarantine lengths after they conduct additional contact tracing and review the information related to the case. Sometimes that means extending the original quarantine order and other times it means reducing the quarantine length. In your daughter's case, I will follow-up on the information you have provided here and previously related to your daughter's quarantine. If I am recalling her circumstances correctly, your daughter was not identified as a close contact to another student at school. Instead, she was identified as a close contact over the weekend during a social gathering. Therefore, I believe the quarantine timeline should have been calculated from your daughter's last point of contact with that individual at that social event. The in-person instructional model did not impact your daughter's exposure in this instance on Monday, and I will connect with the CCDPH to ask for clarification on her release date so that she and we know when she can return to school safely. As I understand it, her release should be 14 days from the close contact that occurred over the weekend.

Unfortunately, with increased students attending in-person schooling and reduced distancing, when a case is identified among students the CCDPH directs quarantines and orders quarantines for 14 days for the homeroom where potential close contact may have occurred. Because distancing is reduced to less than 6 feet within homeroom pods, 14-days is required by the CCDPH. While we are working hard to increase in-person instruction safely, we must adhere to the guidelines and recommendations of the CCDPH. Unfortunately, this includes quarantines when a case is identified.

Regarding shifting back to fully remote Mondays, because exposure and case identification can occur any day of the week, providing an additional day of fully remote instruction may not achieve the goal of more consistent in-person instruction overall. That said, we will continue to closely monitor cases and quarantines, as well as opportunities for improvement. We, like you, hope to avoid classroom quarantines as much as possible and recognize the importance of everyone working together to help reduce exposure and spread of this virus to accomplish this goal. Thank you for being diligent in your efforts to adhere to the quarantine and for seeking additional information.

Your partner in education,

Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org ~ 847.512.6030

On Apr 19, 2021, at 11:14 PM, Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear District 39 Board of Education:

Thank you for your service to our school community during challenging times. While I can understand the many factors that likely prompted your decision to return WJHS students to full in person attendance for 4th quarter, I would like to respectfully ask that the Board reconsider this decision.

Following the first day of full in person attendance, my daughter was identified as a close contact to a student who tested positive — my understanding is that the saliva screening flagged this student and subsequent PCR testing confirmed COVID. With this positive case and others last week, entire home rooms are in quarantine and several other kids who were not in the same homeroom but had other exposure, are out of school — many having to learn independently as their homerooms are not in quarantine.

While we were initially informed that my daughter could return to school on 4/21 — 10 days after her exposure, today we were informed that she will have to remain out of school until 4/27 which will be over 14 days from her exposure. Upon questioning the basis for this change we were told that it's required under CCPHD guidelines because students are not at least 6 feet apart in school.

If we cannot space our students sufficiently to avoid large scale quarantines, this push for full time in person learning is "full time in person" in name only. When we have dozens of kids forced to learn on their own at home, we have hardly achieved the objective of in person learning. To the contrary, we likely are decreasing the amount of in person learning being provided to the junior high community and potentially exacerbating mental and emotional health challenges that even the most well-adjusted kids have faced during the last year.

It's commonly understood that consistency and established routines are key to emotional and mental health and good learning habits. Quarantines and the uncertainty associated with the risks of repeated quarantines in classrooms at full capacity undermines the ultimate goal of our schools which I believe is providing quality education. The current set up seems to prioritize the headline of returning to "full time" while actually undermining the ability of the school to provide quality education to the students. We now are leaving many kids to teach themselves or have sporadic contact with any teacher for two-week stretches.

In addition, with the lengthy quarantine period being applied to entire classes regardless of actual close contact (which does not seem to be consistent with current CDC guidelines and which seems to ignore the benefits of mask wearing and the data on low rates of school spread in other locales where it has been studied), I am concerned that we are also incentivizing parents to stop being forthright about possible illness and exposure, and likely to stop participating in saliva screening to seek to avoid excessive quarantines.

I know that the return to full time voices were loud in our community and I certainly would love nothing more than a return to full time school for my 8th grader. But the bottom line is that we can't both adhere to current public health department guidelines and maintain consistent full time in person classes. All it takes is one case to send 25+ kids into quarantine for two weeks. If we return to A/B cohorts, adequate distancing is possible and fewer kids are impacted by a positive case.

Finally, if returning to A/B cohorts is not possible, I would encourage the Board to implement a remote Monday to allow saliva screening to be processed before we put all of the kids in the not adequately distanced class together. Certainly there will still be cases that are discovered later in the week but at least we would allow the benefit of the screening to be realized before it's too late to stop some exposure.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Laura Fisher

From: Abby Karasick <[REDACTED]>

Subject: solutions to growing quarantine problem

Date: April 24, 2021 at 3:33:34 PM CDT

To: Lisa Schneider Fabes

<fabesl@wilmette39.org>, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, panzicaf@wilmette39.org, poehlinga@wilmette39.org, stee nm@wilmette39.org, stonee@wilmette39.org, sternwee@wilmette39.org

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, [REDACTED]

To the District 39 Board of Education;

Since our letter to you yesterday with suggestions on how to keep kids with Covid from entering school, we have just learned that our son, a 7th grader at WJHS, was in a classroom with a child on Wednesday who has tested positive for Covid. This email should not come as a surprise to you. We know that you have heard from many parents since the District began 5 day/week classes 3 weeks ago, because of the problematic issue of 3 feet distancing in the classroom while the CDC still considers a "close contact" 6 feet or less.

Our letter to you yesterday was about suggestions for how to keep kids with Covid from entering school. One of those, which we have repeatedly suggested to you, is that Safeguard screening be made mandatory for all students in grades 5-8. The Board has stated that by making screening mandatory, it would exclude non-participating children from in-person learning. This assertion by the Board has been proven false. By NOT mandating a rigorous implementation of the Safeguard saliva screening program including i) making participation mandatory and ii) allowing time for the results to be collected BEFORE kids return to school each week, you have now excluded many, many healthy kids from school. According to the weekly Metrics reports, it appears that at least 7 classes have been quarantined in the last 3 weeks. Your choice to not make screening mandatory is leading to the very outcome you say you do not want. Screening will not catch every single Covid case that might otherwise enter school. But the expected number of situations where that happens will be vastly less than what it is now.

We are aware that many parents are deeply upset about the number of quarantines we've already seen in the District in these 3 weeks. We are also aware that several suggestions in addition to the above have been made to you to try to address this problem, a problem which is clearly negatively impacting our kids and our families. The board should consider two options:

a) four day/week in-person instruction with Monday being a remote day to allow time for the processing and communication of screening results, and mandatory participation in screening for grades 5-8. This is New Trier's approach.

or

b) return to the A/B hybrid model. While this solution isn't perfect, frankly it was working, and should absolutely be considered now as you look for solutions to what is clearly a serious problem.

We look forward to your prompt reply.

Best,

Abby and Steve Karasick

rom: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Subject: Re: Quarantine re [REDACTED]'s Homeroom

Date: April 26, 2021 at 11:35:57 AM CDT

To: Chad Shifrin <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Jeff Dees <deesj@wilmette39.org>, Kate Dominique <dominiqk@wilmette39.org>, Lesley Shifrin <[REDACTED]>

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Shifrin,

Thank you for writing to share your concern. We agree that the quarantine period is long and we very much want to avoid classroom quarantines as much as possible.

Unfortunately, though, we must follow the quarantine orders of the Cook County Department of Public Health. At this time, the CCDPH continues to order quarantine for individuals based on potential close contact exposure, which they define as being within 6 feet of a Covid-positive individual for a cumulative 15 minutes or more over a 48-hour time period. When classrooms cannot provide 6-feet of distancing, the CCDPH requires a full 14-day quarantine. These are not policies of the district, but rather orders from the CCDPH. A shortened quarantine is only allowed when classrooms are able to provide a full 6-feet of distancing for students.

We, too, see the tremendous benefits of in-person instruction and want to avoid quarantines as much as possible; however, we must adhere to the orders of CCDPH when cases are reported.

Our families can help by closely monitoring symptoms (even minor ones as is so often the case among youth) and potential exposure that may occur outside of school, and staying home when either are present.

Thank you for your support and ongoing advocacy.

Your partner in education,

Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org ~ 847.512.6030

On Apr 25, 2021, at 9:47 AM, Chad Shifrin <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Mr. Dees:

As I suspect you hear from many parents, we are disappointed by the current policy to quarantine all students at their home for 14 days if they are in the same homeroom as an individual that recently contracted COVID-19. The district's policy exceeds the CDC guidelines (and numerous others) and does not appear reasonable given the change of circumstances over the last month, namely that vaccines are readily available for all teachers, staff, and community adults. A negative COVID test result with a greatly shortened quarantine is more in line with published guidelines and common sense.

If there is anything we can do to support a modification to the policy, please let us know as we are more than willing to advocate for a change to this policy in whatever manner would be most effective. As the school year winds down, each day students can be at school has a compounding impact on their mental health and academic achievement. This lengthy quarantine will have significant adverse effects upon the students' wellbeing.

We strongly urge you to revisit the unreasonably long quarantine policy to better reflect current circumstances. A shortened quarantine will meet our mutual goals of providing the students with in-person education and keeping our community safe.

Thank you for all you do and have done during this difficult year.

We have also cc'd the D39 Board as we were informed they have a meeting this week and we encourage the Board to consider a change to the quarantine policy.

Chad and Lesley Shifrin

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, April 24, 2021 8:43 PM
To: Chad Shifrin <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Quarantine

Dear [REDACTED]'s Homeroom,

Thank you for your flexibility and patience as we pivot to remote learning until 5/6. If you could please remind students to jump on the homeroom Zoom link from our hybrid days, it would be much appreciated. I will go through more of the details with students during Monday homeroom. If you have any questions about quarantine procedures or protocols, please reach out to Mr. Dees for more information.

Happy weekending!

On Mon, Apr 26, 2021 at 11:38 AM Buddy Bush <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Just a quick note to say how thankful I am for the last two weeks of in-person school. I was cautiously optimistic that hybrid would expand for 4th quarter and realize the heroic effort it has taken to navigate each of these decisions. Thank you for your time, research, commitment to our community and hopefully the ability to ignore the tone/misinformation I see on Facebook.

Highlight quotes from our kids:

- "I didn't realize how much I liked my Latin teacher. She's SO funny in person." (Calyx 7th)
- "I've learned more this week than this year." (Lina 5th)
- "Group projects suck way less in person than on Zoom" (Calyx)
- "Wait, we are going to school again today?" (both)

Fingers crossed and holding my breath through the last few weeks.

Best,

Buddy Bush

Hello District 39 School Board,

As I reflect on our years in District 39 I think of the committees and countless friendships I made while my daughters attended school. Even though we're at New Trier now our hearts are always with District 39.

I am honored to call Ellen Sternweiler my friend. We met while I served in Pass39 (Parents Association of Student Services). We could always count on Ellen to offer support to our parent community, add insight and a parent's perspective. She is committed to our children and has a special heart for our disabled population.

Ellen is a busy mom with three children. She also runs a business called Sensory Kids, LLC out of her home. You would think this was enough. It wasn't. Ellen willingly stepped in to serve on our school board. It was there that her commitment and respect for all our children, their parents and our district grew.

I want to personally thank Ellen for her service on the school board.

Best regards,

Jennifer Nash, Former Pass 39 Committee Member and proud parent and D39 alumna

From: Shook Family [REDACTED]
Subject: Ellen Sternweiler
Date: April 26, 2021 at 9:45 PM
To: board@wilmette39.org



Thank you so much for arranging a farewell for Ellen. If any of below helps you - please use it or use some. I'm not sure what format you will have.

She's such a great supporter to the educators, parents and students. Her wealth of information, past experiences and willingness to help others has helped dozens of families succeed with their children's learning. She's an amazing advocate who does all she can for the good of others. So blessed to call her a friend and we are all lucky to have her in our district.

Jocelyn Shook

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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.

From: Rebecca Guryan [REDACTED]
Subject: 10 day quarantine/mandatory screening
Date: April 27, 2021 at 1:03 PM
To: Kate Dominique dominik@wilmette39.org, Kelly Jackson jacksonk@wilmette39.org, board@wilmette39.org, cremasck@wilmette39.org, fabesi@wilmette39.org



To the Board of Education, Dr. Cremascoli, Principal Dominique and Principal Jackson-

Given the current situation that is arising at WJHS/HMS. I thought I would pass along the information that New Trier sent in regards to doing a 10 day quarantine vs a 14 day quarantine which is currently required by D39.

I would hope that this information might lead D39 to change their quarantine policy as the need to quarantine has been unfortunately increasing due to the decision to decrease the distance to from 6ft to 3ft. I also would hope that with the increase in cases of Covid cases you would consider making the screening mandatory as once to help avoid the lengthy and potentially avoidable quarantines.

Thank you for your time,
Rebecca Guryan

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

From: Notification from New Trier High School District 203 [REDACTED] >
Date: Tue, Apr 27, 2021 at 12:32 PM
Subject: New Trier: IDPH School Quarantine Protocols
To: <[REDACTED]>

Dear New Trier Families,

With athletic seasons in full swing as well as AP exams, senior activities, and many end-of-year events on the horizon for our students, we are receiving many questions about Illinois Department of Public Health requirements for quarantine after exposure to a case of COVID-19.

We acknowledge how disappointing and frustrating it is to find out that your student has been determined to be in “close contact” with a person who has COVID-19 and must miss in-person classes, athletics, and other activities for a 10-day quarantine period. We hope that by providing this information, you can understand the guidance under which New Trier must operate so you can make informed decisions about sending your student to in-person classes or activities.

What are the IDPH requirements for quarantine after exposure at a school?

Under Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines, anyone determined to be a “close contact” to a person with a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 must quarantine for **10 days from the date of last contact**. Quarantine means being confined to your own home and not interacting with those outside your household. Students in quarantine may not attend in-person classes or activities.

What is “close contact”?

A close contact is defined as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days before getting tested) regardless of mask wearing or other mitigation factors.

When a student tests positive for COVID-19, New Trier engages in a strict contact

tracing process to identify and notify close contacts. We do this in partnership with the Cook County Department of Public Health and IDPH. We only have students quarantine if they meet the criteria to be considered a close contact.

Where is “close contact” likely to happen? Are there differences between the Northfield and Winnetka Campuses?

Right now classrooms at the Winnetka Campus remain at a 6-foot distance, meaning students simply attending class are generally not “close contacts.” At the Northfield Campus, where attendance is higher and classrooms are smaller, the distance in most classrooms is now less than 6 feet. That means students can be considered “close contacts” for sitting near someone in class who is later determined to be positive for COVID-19.

In athletics and activities, we talk to coaches and students to determine who may be considered a close contact depending on the activity and determinations of the risk of that activity.

What are the exceptions to the requirements for a 10-day quarantine?

- If your student is fully vaccinated (14 days post-second dose of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or a single dose of Johnson and Johnson vaccine), they will be exempt from quarantine.
- If your student has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days, they will be exempt from quarantine.

Documentation must be provided. **These are the only exceptions allowed under the state’s guidance.**

Can I shorten the quarantine period by getting a negative test result or a lab result showing the presence of antibodies?

No. Under IDPH guidance for students attending school, there is no possibility of early release from quarantine with a negative COVID-19 test nor proof of antibodies.

What about wearing masks, saliva testing, and other mitigation measures at New Trier? Don’t those make the risk of transmission low and eliminate the need for quarantine?

The mitigation measures we have in place at New Trier do make the risk of COVID-19 transmission at school low. We have not had any reported cases of in-school transmission. However, while the IDPH has allowed schools to reduce social distancing in classrooms, the state has not changed its definition of close contacts nor the requirements for quarantine.

We continue to strongly encourage all students to adhere to masking and social distancing outside of school activities, avoid gathering in large groups, continue dropping off saliva samples on time, and stay home if they feel sick. These steps will help reduce the need for quarantines at New Trier.

Sincerely,

Denise Dubravec
Fontanetta

Paul Waechtler

Augie

Principal, Winnetka Campus
Director

Principal, Northfield Campus

Athletic

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.

From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: 10 day quarantine/mandatory screening
Date: April 27, 2021 at 2:59:29 PM CDT
To: Rebecca Guryan <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Good afternoon Rebecca,

Thank you for your email.

Regarding New Trier, it is my understanding that New Trier continues to maintain 6-feet of distancing within their classrooms. Therefore, the 10-day quarantine is allowed by the CCDPH. Where 6-feet of distancing is not maintained, such as within athletic teams, a 14-day quarantine is required.

As a district, we continue to re-assess and make adjustments to our in-person model; however, we must adhere to the quarantine orders as issued by the CCDPH. The CCDPH has been clear with us that a 14-day quarantine is required at our 5th-8th grade campus due to the distancing provided within the classroom, which is less than 6-feet.

We agree that a shorter quarantine period would have a positive effect for students provided it does not compromise the health and safety of in-person learning, and we continue to advocate with the CCDPH for this option to be made available to us. Thus far, the CCDPH has been steadfast in their requirement of 14-days when less than 6-feet of distancing is provided within classrooms. We will continue to advocate and stand ready to implement the shorter quarantine option if it becomes available to us.

Regarding mandatory screening, we do not have the infrastructure required to go from screening to excluding students for failure to comply with a requirement for screening. There are legal, logistical, operational and technological changes that would be required. While we have the capacity to process the samples, we do not have the capacity to process missing samples and then enforce and exclude students who do not turn in their sample. In addition, the board does not have the desire to exclude students from attending school who are otherwise healthy, without symptoms and known exposure. Given the small number of cases identified from Safeguard since the program began, and the investment in terms of dollars, technology and people hours required to implement a mandatory program, the District will keep the program voluntary.

Best,

Lisa

From: Maja Kos [REDACTED]
Subject: D39 Quarantines
Date: April 27, 2021 at 2:17 PM
To: board@wilmette39.org
Cc: Kari Cremascoli cremasck@wilmette39.org, Bonnie Kim [REDACTED]

MK

Dear D39 BOE,

I am writing with some comments regarding the current quarantine situation at D39.

First, with respect to the reported quarantine data on D39's metrics page, it would be helpful if the district regularly included a further breakdown of the number of students quarantining. Specifically, how many of the total quarantining students are quarantining separately from their homeroom? In my view, this is the group of students most adversely affected by quarantine—because they do not receive synchronous remote instruction and are instead expected to complete independent makeup work for two weeks. Additionally, I hope the district is working with the families of these students to ensure the students can have some level of synchronous check-ins or instruction during the quarantine period.

In terms of the length of quarantine, it looks like New Trier just made 10-day quarantine (rather than 14) official for students in class with a positive case for more than 15 min and at a distance of less than 6 feet. I imagine this makes it pretty straightforward for D39 to follow suit. Hopefully, this will be discussed at the board meeting tonight.

Also, if the length of quarantine is indeed changed to 10 days, it becomes even more critical for the district to communicate to families that the Sunday-before-2pm saliva-sample drop-off at NT is *strongly preferred*, as it allows for saliva-sample processing by the end of the day Sunday. This would identify potential cases prior to school on Monday, which means the quarantine clock would start before the weekend and include TWO weekends, thereby reducing the current 10 days of in-person school missed to 5 or 6 in-person days missed. If, on the other hand, students submit their samples on Monday and are later identified as potentially positive, they will have already been at school that week, which means the quarantine clock for exposed students would start at the beginning of the school week and include only ONE weekend, resulting in 8 days of missed in-person school.

Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.

Kind regards,
Maja Kos (mother of a 7th grade WJHS students)

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From: Lisa Schneider Fabes <fabesl@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: New Trier: IDPH School Quarantine Protocols
Date: April 27, 2021 at 2:55:11 PM CDT
To: Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Hi Laura,

Regarding New Trier, it is my understanding that New Trier continues to maintain 6-feet of distancing within their classrooms. Therefore, the 10-day quarantine is allowed by the CCDPH. Where 6-feet of distancing is not maintained, such as within athletic teams, a 14-day quarantine is required.

As a district, we continue to re-assess and make adjustments to our in-person model; however, we must adhere to the quarantine orders as issued by the CCDPH. The CCDPH has been clear with us that a 14-day quarantine is required at our 5th-8th grade campus due to the distancing provided within the classroom, which is less than 6-feet.

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Best,
Lisa

On Tue, Apr 27, 2021 at 1:07 PM Laura Fisher <[REDACTED]> wrote:
Hello

Why is New Trier able to use 10 day quarantine and also able to conduct actual contact tracing and not just presume everyone in a class is a close contact while D39 uses 14 days and makes that assumption? It seems like we should be able to take the same approach. Is the IDPH applying different rules for k-8? Thank you for your consideration.

Laura Fisher

Begin forwarded message:

From: Notification from New Trier High School District 203 <[REDACTED]>
Date: April 27, 2021 at 12:31:07 PM CDT
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: New Trier: IDPH School Quarantine Protocols

Dear New Trier Families,

With athletic seasons in full swing as well as AP exams, senior activities, and many end-of-year events on the horizon for our students, we are receiving many questions about Illinois Department of Public Health requirements for quarantine after exposure to a case of COVID-19.

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Denise Dubravec
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Paul Waechtler

Augie

Principal, Winnetka Campus
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Athletic