Hello, my name is Kaylyn Ahn and this is my public comment:

Hello, I wanted to talk about coronavirus protections for faculty. Because teachers are considered essential workers, it is your right to mandate employees to return to work, but it is not right.

As a student, I get the choice to go to school physically or stay at home. I choose to stay at home for classes because I know what’s best for my health and my family’s safety. However, teachers don’t get a choice unless given accommodations. Meaning, if they don’t qualify, they have to risk their health. They have to risk their family’s health. Their children’s health. Their parents’ health.

It is not moral. It is inhumane to force people into situations where they can catch a virus that could significantly hurt them or hurt their loved ones.

Even with social distancing and masks requirements in place, there are so many opportunities for spread. For example, when I went to school to take an SAT, there was no social distancing outside of school while we were waiting. I saw kids wearing masks below their chins, under their noses, or not wearing them at all around a large group of people.

It is clear that even with procedures and guidelines, people are not following the rules. And with cases rising both nationally, locally, and district wide, I urge you to give teachers a choice. The pandemic is hard enough as it is. It is stressful enough as it is. I can’t understand how difficult it must be, but teaching is hard enough as it is.

Please, just like students, let teachers choose what’s best for themselves and their loved ones.

Thank you,
Kaylyn Ahn
Public comment for Dec. 10 board meeting
1 message

To: rinn.knoepfle@d214.org

Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 9:12 AM

To the board and the administration:

At the end of November, shortly after the announcement of the so-called Adaptive Pause, I sent an e-mail to both Superintendent Schuler and Mr. Petro, as president of the school board, calling for them to reopen schools in order to enable students to attend teachers’ pre-finals review sessions in person as well as to take final exams in school, especially important for those students who have no quiet study space in their homes. I pointed out that there is no guidance from any level of government to close schools and that, in fact, the ongoing guidance from the state and county both is to stay at home as much as possible in all other respects, so that “businesses and schools can remain open.”

I did not receive a response.

Now I find that my concerns have been addressed indirectly: I’ve heard from my son and from other parents that teachers are responding to this difficult situation simply by cancelling final exams. This might seem to be a benefit to students, but some of those students will actually be worse off, in situations where they had had a rocky start to the semester and had been hoping that an improvement in the final would help them improve their overall grade. Even for those students for whom it appears to be a godsend, it does not actually remedy the underlying issue of student learning, but papers over the problem.

What’s more, some parents have learned that to the west of us, a school district which did attempt to meet students’ needs by bringing them back for this crucial period, has been threatened with a sick-out by the teachers if they continue on this path — and that’s by the very teachers’ union local which also represents the teachers in our schools. Have the district 214 teachers made the same threat? Are the schools being shuttered out of threats or fear of a similar action here, or even simply in response to the prior meeting’s open letter despite assurances at the prior board meeting that this was not the case? The lack of transparency by the board and administration regarding the “pause” makes it a very difficult task indeed to trust the administration in this regard.

Finally, after having previously reviewed statistics on the 44% increase in student’s Ds and Fs, I had requested, under the FOIA provisions, to be provided with any analyses that had been done by the administration, and was told that no such analysis exists. To be sure, the conventional wisdom says that FOIA officers view their task as providing as little information as they can, by parsing the request as narrowly as they can manage while not violating the letter of the law, but this is still concerning. If the FOIA officer was indeed truthful, this means that any efforts to remedy the situation are occurring only, if at all, as individual initiatives rather than collaboratively. However much administration and board members tell us, “Message: I care” (kids, look it up), they are demonstrating that the truth is in fact quite the opposite.

Regards,

Elizabeth Bauer
Parent and resident
Board members,

My name is Jacalyn Derengowski, I live at [redacted] and I have a freshman at Prospect. I want to lend my voice to the other parents who have read the letter that has been posted to the d214 website board from the Union President, John Braglia, to Dr Small, Superintendent of d211. The letter, instructing teachers the different avenues to pursue to not come in to do their jobs, shows Science was not what was behind school closures. Dr Small closed schools for the teachers Union, not the health of students/teachers.

The letter speaks for itself and logically, we can infer, that the Superintendent of d214 closed our schools for the same reason as we have the same teachers union.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Stop using the students in our community for political/financial gain. We did not elect you to represent the teachers unions or the politicians, you are supposed to represent the community.

I included John Kass’ article below, as like the Emperor’s New Clothes, the community is waking up to what is really going on in our schools.


We need the exact plan and confirmation that d214 schools will open January 19th, with a full remote option for those families who choose remote. Stop the excuses and don’t ask for any money from the tax payers. You created the problem, now fix it.

Tighten the belts of the district, just like the families/businesses in our community who tightened their belts.

Open the schools now and let them learn! The exodus from Illinois is happening and will only worsen, if d214 is not open on January 19th.

Jacalyn and James Derengowski

Sent from my iPad
Dear Board of Directors and Superintendent:

This is being submitted for public comment, to be read at the December 10th Board of Education meeting. I have included an attachment which is to be posted to the D214 website.

This comment is in reference to a letter that the President of Local 1211 (our district’s teacher union) wrote to the D211 Superintendent. We have provided a copy of the text from that letter for your reference.

In the letter, the Union president makes it very clear that he will do everything in his power to prevent teachers from having to teach from their place of employment if children are to be present in the schools for hybrid instruction for 9 days before the Winter Break.

In the letter, the union president is instructing all teachers to take Work Schedule Modifications, Medical Accommodations and to respond to Daily Wellness Screening prompts in such a way so teachers do not have to report to work in the classrooms. Teachers were told to go to their physicians to get the paperwork in order to obtain these accommodations and specifically instructing teachers to lie or exaggerate about having conditions that would exempt them from entering the school buildings.

Further in the letter, the Union President is rejecting a mandate made by the 211 Superintendent that indicates teachers and staff must have travel plans pre-approved during the holiday periods.

Apparently, teachers cannot teach in schools with children because of health concerns but have no issues with sitting shoulder to shoulder with other humans on airplanes, or traveling to less-restrictive states to mingle with unmasked locals?

_This would indicate that D211 reacted to the lack of staffing as the reason behind their move to the adaptive pause, and also to allow teachers the freedom to travel and ignore the Tier 3 Mitigations._

Being that D214 shares the same teacher’s union as D211, logic would indicate that the D214 adaptive pause is due to a major staffing issue and serves to placate teachers and union demands, rather than out of an “abundance of caution” and local virus spread, based on Suburban Cook County metrics and Tier 3 mitigation recommendations. Clearly, this is not the case.

It is shameful that our district leaders and decision makers are kowtowing to what amounts as the country’s largest teacher’s strike in US History to the detriment of our children.

Schools can and should be open immediately.

_If you do not open the schools, then we demand that you begin the process of consolidating operations and selling off of extraneous properties._

If “Zoom School” is the best we can offer this generation, then we demand the Zoom class sizes to be increased and eliminate the teaching and administrative staff by at least 50%. After all, the students aren’t learning much, students are cheating their way through classes. (which you have deemed appropriate!). _Technology is all you are interested in and invested in_. If you are so dedicated to eliminating the human factor then the current number of human staff and human admin personnel must be reduced proportionately. In addition, the Board of Education can be proportionately reduced by half as well.
No need for tax increases.

We would like a written explanation of how this would demonstrate transparency and open communications with the taxpaying community. If you have lied to the general public about this, what else are you lying about? Now you are asking for more taxpayer funding after all these lies and destruction?

Regards,

Kathy Murschel

Laura Schillmoeller

We the Parents, People and Taxpayers

Attachments

Complete Letter from John Braglia to Dr. Small, D211 Superintendent
Dr. Small,
The Board’s decision to return students to a hybrid model for 9 days prior to the winter break, still within the quarantine window from Thanksgiving break, to schools absent of central office administrators and School Board members is not prudent nor responsible. This position seems hypocritical in light of today’s decision to shift Curriculum Committee meetings from in-person at the Adv Center to Zoom meetings. The Board’s decision to curtail the Adaptive Pause seems to be absent of any scientific support and appears to reflect ulterior motives. The District 211 staff is not responsible for the COVID virus, and furthermore, we are extremely unhappy with not being able to teach and work with students in-person. However, to compromise the health and safety of the entire staff during a temporary downward trend in the metrics, even though the death count in Illinois hit an all-time high this week, seems reckless.

Therefore, I am recommending all staff with serious concerns about returning to school (i.e., with students present) put in for a Work Schedule Modification (i.e., the provision that allows people to work remotely as a result of living with or caring for someone with an underlying condition) or a Medical Accommodation (i.e., allows a person to work remotely because they have an underlying condition). Eligibility of medical accommodations include physical and emotional issues (i.e., anxiety caused as a result of entering what is or what is perceived to be an unsafe environment, physical disabilities, hypertension, diabetes, etc. all constitute an underlying condition). I will instruct staff to utilize the current system in place through Human Resources to obtain one of these provisions, which includes securing necessary documentation from their physicians/therapists, etc., to then contact the D211 Human Resources Department (JBritton@d211.org), and to fill out the district application.

I am also advising staff to answer all Daily Wellness Screening prompts with a strict interpretation. In other words, if a staff member is anxious or concerned about their own health and well-being, they need to respond to the prompts (i.e., anxiety-induced headaches, stomach pain, extreme fatigue, etc.) honestly. This is not how I hoped we would address the COVID pandemic in District 211, however, I hope this provides staff with an option in light of this poor decision supported by the Board of Education.

As far as the pre-approved travel announcement that you sent out today, you and I never discussed this, it was never negotiated between the Board and the Union; and therefore, is not recognized by the Union. In fact, I don’t believe it is even legal for you to make such an absurd request. As a result, the Union will not recognize, nor will its members abide by, any pre-approved travel provision unilaterally proposed by the Board. I look forward to working with you, as we have in the past, towards developing a plan to return our students to a normal school experience without compromising the health and safety of our staff.

Thank you,
John Braglia
President
District 211 Teachers’ Union
Local 1211, IFT-AFT, AFL-CIO