

From: **Monique von Doehren** <movond@yahoo.com>

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Subject: Reopening of School Plan - Feedback from John and Monique Patti

To: csharkey@hbschools.org <csharkey@hbschools.org>

CC: John Patti <jpatti74@comcast.net>, Monique von Doehren <movond@yahoo.com>

March 16, 2021

To the attention of the High Bridge Board of Education,

I understand from previous BOE meetings, that all correspondence regarding the reopening of school should be directed to Dr. Hobaugh. However, I am choosing to direct my correspondence to you, High Bridge Board of Education, because I believe that my correspondence with the High Bridge School Administrative team is falling on deaf ears. My correspondence with Dr. Hobaugh comes from 20 years of school experience as well as my role as a mother to 5 children.

I begin by sharing that as an employee in a neighboring school district in Hunterdon County, I have been involved in the "Reopening Task Force" since June 2020. Our district has been extremely pro-active in solidifying response phases for getting students back into school as the COVID Activity Report moves to orange, yellow, and ultimately green. These phases are well planned and ready for execution as the COVID report changes. In addition, necessary PPE is available, allowing the district students and district staff to safely be present within a school building. This plan prioritized our more vulnerable students, students requiring special education services, and then moved to address our younger population. Our entire PreK – 8th grade district has been back to in-person learning 4 days week for the past month, reflecting the date when our region transitioned to 'yellow'.

At the March 8th BOE meeting, Dr. Hobaugh used the BOE meeting platform as his opportunity to share with the district information about his reopening plans. It was hard to provide constructive feedback considering there was little opportunity to process the newly learned information. The presentation confirmed the reactive approach of the High Bridge School District's reopening process. I was relieved however, to hear at the BOE meeting on March 8, 2021, that the parent survey results supported a majority in favor of 4 days back with early dismissals each day. This consistency each week of in-person learning is necessary to support meaningful educational growth, especially for our students with special needs and for our younger students, K – 3rd grade.

Dr. Hobaugh put a great deal of emphasis maintaining social distancing of 6 feet. Honestly, I am tired of hearing the excuses of maintaining 6 feet when I often see and hear of experiences within the school building that does not comply with that 6 feet recommendation. Statements at the BOE meeting that indicate a lack of necessary PPE that would incur a cost of \$18/student, is unacceptable, especially when parents have not had the chance to offer the funding for that purchase. That is less than what I pay for a field trip for one of my children.

Learning that at the BOE meeting on March 15, 2021 that the proposal is to send students into school for 2 weeks with an early dismissal, and then 1 week all virtual, is NOT thinking about the students, especially our younger ones, nor is it taking into consideration the countless accommodations parents have had to make to their work schedules to facilitate this current hybrid model of 2 days in-person and 3 days all virtual.

Please advocate for us! I know that I am not the only parent upset by last night's reopening proposal. I believe the implementation date for this new model is 1 month from now. I also hear that yet another survey is being sent out. Please put an end to these stalling tactics. Please listen to your parents who already responded to the first two surveys. Please return our students back into school each week with more consistency, while also respecting the parents home/work accommodations that have been put into place.

Please advocate for a model that will best support meaningful educational gains for our young Pre-K – 8th grade student. Throwing a complete change, with the claim that it will increase the amount of time that a student is in class/week, is not justified. Full 5 day-virtual learning weeks for young children who are left to self-manage their virtual classrooms and work requirements, is definitely NOT in the best interest of a student's education. Our kindergarten students, alone, are still working on developing learning behaviors that are necessary to nurture educational growth. This news leaves me upset, disappointed, and regretful. I am hopeful that you, High Bridge BOE, will convey to Dr. Hobaugh and his administrative team, that this proposal is not acceptable!

Respectfully,

Monique & John Patti

Monique and John Patti

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"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."

~ St. Mother Teresa