

Good Evening,

I hope everyone is doing well and staying healthy.

I am reaching out for clarification on the Pioneer Press article from today referencing that 95% of stage II staff are comfortable returning to work. I would like to know where this figure is coming from that Kenyatta McCarty referenced. As I talk with peers, we have anecdotally found that staff are reporting they are not comfortable returning to in-person work, especially with the recent surge in cases.

While I have you.

I am a second-grade teacher at Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary. I am a proud SPPS teacher and have been so for the last 8 years. In fact, I enjoy my work, my school, and my district so much that I choose to commute from Plymouth after we moved our family from our home in Minneapolis.

I know these are unprecedented times and I know extremely tough decisions need to be made. I am reaching out with a teacher perspective and I thank you for your time in reading it.

I am not going to get into the data about Covid-19 disproportionately affecting Black and Brown scholars, because you already know all that. I am going to share with you is my personal, local, and immediate experiences with my scholars.

**Student Participation:** As I stated I am a teacher at Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary. With that being said, you know attendance is a constant focus of our school. My morning meeting attendance via distance learning is averaging 90%, higher than my in person daily attendance. My small group synchronous instruction has been 95% attendance. That means I am getting time with those scholars every day. My concern is if we transition to a hybrid model. Those scholars will go down from getting morning meeting and group time everyday, to now getting it 2 days a week when they are in the building. That brings into question, now that I am in the building with my scholars 4 days a week how am I engaging with my scholars online? How can I hold them accountable when I am not accessible?

**Work-Load Balance:** We all know teachers are workaholics. I am hard-pressed to find a colleague that does not go above and beyond the call of duty. I know you have heard a lot of reports about the hours teachers are working in the distance learning model. We have delegated the workload amongst the grade level team. I am tech savvy, and I am efficient, but with those two qualities I am still working AT LEAST 11 hour work days and often work at least 4 hours on the weekend to make sure I have high quality engaging, purposeful lessons posted for my scholars. I am having a hard time wrapping my brain around how I will get all my work done planning both in person, and online content in my 5 hours of prep while in the building and during the day

Friday. Part of Friday will need to be dedicated to team planning so let's take an hour out. PLC's are weekly so that's another hour. Grading and responding to every Seesaw activity takes me just over an hour a day so the 12 contract work hours I have without kids (preps + Friday) after taking out mandatory meetings is down to 10 hours, then taking out work time for Seesaw responses is down to 5 hours to record, create, upload, and schedule Seesaw content. I could go on, but I know you get the point. Teacher burn out is a real problem even prior to Covid, but this is a whole new level of burnout. We love our students, and we want to do everything we can for them. But I will not work around the clock and take all my time from my baby. I have a 3 year old and she needs her mama.

**Health & Safety:** I am concerned for both student safety and staff safety. We have scholars who love to show love. We have the best huggers at Obama. We have scholars who physiological and safety needs are not being met and those manifest in many different ways during the school day. We have scholars who are highly physical, we have scholars who need to leave the classroom and do so without permission at times, (contact tracing difficulties will arise). Overall though, I am concerned with being in proximity with 15+ people in a room for more than 15 minutes at a time per the CDC's guideline recommendations. Masks can only prevent so much, and I can do my best monitoring mask usage, proper mask placement, constant hand washing, etc. But simply put I am having a hard time understanding why. Why are we putting students' health at risk? Why are we putting families' health at risk? Why am I being asked to my put my healthy at risk? I won't be able to hug my students. I can't crouch down at their desk and have a writing conferences. I can't host small groups at my kidney table. I can't have kids circle up for restorative circles and morning meetings. **Am I risking my health, and the health of my family, to host a study hall where scholars come to school to get in person help on their Seesaw assignments?**

**Psychological implications?** There is an argument that scholars need to get back into the building to be with their friends. I agree, personal relationships are a huge part of education and growing up. I hate to think of them missing out on that. I offer lunch times, snack times, and game times for kids to get that virtually. I am more concerned about the psychological impact of coming into a building and being 6 feet from friends and not being able to play with them, hug them, and truly interact with each other. I offer a perspective of the harm/trauma this could cause. School won't be the same as it was, it will feel heavy, rule laden and, overall, just might not fulfill the fun and socialization they have been missing out on.

Now that this email is off my to do list I can move on to the 10 other high priority items that need to get done before I can peacefully sleep. I hope to hit the hay by midnight. I logged 11 hours today, and I am still not done.

I am worried. I am worried for our scholars, I am worried for our families, but I am most worried about teachers, and the future of the profession. We are overworked, we are

feeling underappreciated. We are under a teacher shortage, and this is shedding a lot of light on societies over-expectations of educators. How are we going to recover from this?

Again, thank you for your time reading this.

Kindly,



Mrs. Ashlee [REDACTED].

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## SPPS COVID-19 Reporting System

**Employees, students, and visitors of SPPS: Report symptoms of COVID-19, a positive case of COVID-19 or a close contact exposure to someone with COVID-19.**