

To our SPPS School Board,

I'm writing to share with you my concerns about returning to school as a phase 2 educator. I've been an itinerant therapist in the district for 10 years and I love the special education students I get to work with daily year after year. I enjoy growing our rapport, building routines & supporting their social emotional needs.

I'm also a mother and expecting another child in April. Working from home in a distant learning setting hasn't been the same as being in the classroom, however, I feel like the extra work that it takes to build a trusting relationship and foundation with my students is worth it. They deserve it. They deserve a therapist who can tune in to them individually if need be, a therapist who has structured a safe and predictable therapeutic environment, who can structure a routine for them on 1 setting instead of introducing them to a mixed environment that is no longer familiar to them. An environment that I believe isn't ready to balance all of the challenges that come with returning to school. My students thrive on routine. The start date of Nov. 16 is a short week with no school on Friday (no chance of remembering to check DL work) followed by a week where group B will not get 2 days of school PLUS another missed Friday opportunity to practice DL as a full group. Then, there are only 3 full weeks (and another just 2 day week - no in person school for group B again) before we are on Winter break. Generally, the first SIX weeks of school are spent on building routines. There just isn't enough time to make this as successful as it could be.

On a personal level, I applied for ADA accommodations back in September and have yet to hear from HR on their decision or to have a meeting with them where I can get them more information from my doctor if need be. After a decision is made today, if in fact we are to return to school in November, I can guarantee I will be emailed by all 10 of my classroom teachers that I see EVERY DAY to see when I will be coming in to their classrooms. We were told at the beginning of the year, that specialists would be on a cart going from room to room...and in my case, building to building. That's 10 classrooms a day for me and 3 buildings. I'm not sure where the time to change PPE gear, sanitize properly, and transition between classrooms (many on different floors and across different sides of buildings) will happen let alone getting to another building in time.

Right now, in distance learning, I'm collecting data, I'm meeting 1:1 with students who need personal help and I'm reaching out to all 10 of my assigned classrooms of students daily with personalized therapeutic experiences that practice choice making, allows them to sing aloud without masks on and risk of exposure, touches on their individual personalities and reaches them on differentiated levels. I'm sending home materials to enhance their experience and have already made plans on how we can elevate their experiences if distance learning continues. I will not have the time to do all of this in a hybrid setting.

I feel as though many of us educators, and itinerant staff in general, can continue to do our BEST work and provide our BEST experiences for students while continuing to work from home in a distance learning setting, where everyone is safe and in predictable environments.

Thank you for your consideration and continued mutual goal of providing a safe and equitable goal of reaching our students and shining on their best potential.

Please vote to continue distance learning.

With continued dedication and passion for students,
Emily [REDACTED]



Emily [REDACTED]
Music Therapist - Board Certified
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"I see my life in terms of music." ~Einstein

