

(The author of this email received a response from Dr. Gothard and shared her email with his responses included in red)

My name is Nicole [REDACTED] and I am a Kindergarten teacher in the district. I am very worried that our leadership in the District is planning to begin Stage 2 of Hybrid. I am asking that you take the time necessary to read about SOME of my concerns and reconsider not opening another stage to Hybrid at this point.

1. **Safety protocol not being met currently in the EKC sites that are already open:** I have students who attend those sites and have sent pictures via Seesaw as a way to respond to their work. In the background of the photos I have seen students wearing masks incorrectly, or no masks. I have seen children working 2-3 together at small tables in very close proximity. Staff working head to head with students with no barriers.

EKC has been in session since March. They have managed to safely offer services with minimal disruptions. Like schools across the country, new norms are being developed, taught, and expected. (JG)

1. **Opening a second stage when the first is not fully functional:** It is just irresponsible to open a second stage (much larger and affecting many more students, families, and staff) when the first stage has not even had time to become fully functional. There is no way to have student or family input on safety and other factors if you don't at least wait until the first stage has a chance to allow students back.

Many districts have opened K-5, K-8, or K-12. I chose to break ours into stages to ensure we could staff our sections. Stage 1 and Stage 2 are not the best comparison as there are many individual needs and modifications provided in schools and programs that are much smaller. I do understand your point and that is why there is more than 4-weeks between the decision and the first day of hybrid. (JG)

1. **Health data moving in the wrong direction:** The numbers for the county are only trending higher. We are in about a 2 week lag as they are 14day number collections and they are only posted on Thursdays. You are looking to make a decision and announce on a Wednesday just before the most current numbers come out. The trend should be that to open more stages we should see the numbers improving. The timing of this also with cold and flu season just beginning is important to consider.

The data you're referring to is the official data used for the safe learning model. Our team has access to many other data sources that provides a good hint to what we might expect on the Thursday reports. The challenge with using real-time data is the lag in the test reporting process. You are correct in the trend moving higher and we will watch this carefully like all other schools in MN, many counties much higher than Ramsey. (JG)

1. **Substitutes:** Are there enough subs in the district? Teachers with young children will need subs for extended times if they are asked to keep their children home from daycares or EKC sits due to "Covid like symptoms" which may or may not just be a common cold. Teachers are already reporting this is occurring currently with daycares.

Substitutes will absolutely be an ongoing challenge. (JG)

1. **Transparency:** The district has not been transparent with the plans they have for how this transition and new model will work. Teachers all over the district are asking many questions and are not getting answers. There are not MOA agreements between the district and the union. Safety protocol checklists are mentioned but I have yet to see one in all of my searching, let alone see one completed. What are the plans for Immersion students in the VLS? The only info I can find says "This will depend..." The district is extremely vague in responding to many questions leaving families and staff with very little confidence and often feeling lied to.

Lied to is a bit strong. We were issued a plan from the state of Minnesota. I made the decision to delay out start because I wanted to ensure we had accurate counts of students in hybrid or VLS. What kind of safety protocol lists are you looking for? We have mandates from the state and district policy that we are and will be following.

I will ask about specific support for DLI and VLS and report back to you. (JG)

In the "Reopen SPPS Staff Update" about returning to Hybrid it states "Students who transition to hybrid learning will have direct, in-person access to educators. All lessons and academic content will still be delivered in Seesaw and Schoology." If I am in class all day 4 days a week to support students when will I film and create all the lessons for the following week. It takes more than one day to film and create a full weeks' worth of lessons and activities in Seesaw. **A student support center model (that is already in the process of opening) would cover this daily support 2 times a week for students who need it.** And allow teachers the time to create quality video lessons and activities as well as hold class meets, small group meets, and individual support sessions in office hours as I am doing now. While keeping the most people safe.

Nicole, I am aware of how hard you and your colleagues are working. It is work that none of us would have ever thought would have been forced upon us. (JG)

Please consider waiting to see how Stage 1 makes the transition and how the District Support Centers make a difference before just jumping to open another Stage in Hybrid Learning!

Thank you for this suggestion. We do have many weeks before 11/16. And again, what we learn from Stage 1 will provide some learning for Stage 2, but there are many differences. (JG)

Thanks for your time and consideration,
Nicki Nolen

Thank you, Nicki,

Joe