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**Subject:** Pre-K Hybrid Concerns

Dear SPPS School Board Members,

Pre-K educators in our district are concerned about a lack of communication around the unique needs and considerations of our youngest learners in the move to a hybrid model. Union stewards and Pre-K educators, in collaboration, have created a list of questions and concerns that we are seeking answers to before our district makes the move to hybrid learning for Stage 2 learners.

To ensure a safe environment for our students and families, along with staff and their families, we ask that you respond to this document with a thorough plan for each concern listed before moving forward with hybrid learning.

Educators need to know what the plans are to make this switch safe, manageable, and beneficial for everyone involved before anyone steps foot in a classroom.

We look forward to your timely response,

The Pre-K Teachers at Pre-K at Rondo  
The Pre-K Team at Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary  
The Pre-K Teachers at Saint Paul Music Academy  
The Pre-K Teachers at Galtier  
The CH Team at Crossroads Montessori  
The Pre-K Team at Wellstone Elementary  
The Pre-K Team Jackson Elementary  
The Pre-K Teachers at Benjamin E. Mays  
The Pre-K Team at The Heights

Sherril Erickson, Pre-K teacher at Bruce Vento  
Brittney Thompson, Pre-K Teacher, Bruce Vento Elementary  
Mandee Scherping, Pre-K Teacher at Bruce Vento Elementary  
Christine Vang, Pre-K EA at Bruce Vento Elementary  
Nivedita Amin, Pre-K TA at Bruce Vento Elementary  
Cha Her, Bilingual EA at Bruce Vento Elementary  
Cathie Duncan, CH teacher, JJ Hill Montessori

Emma Conway, School Social Worker, Pre-K at Rondo and Benjamin E Mays Magnet	Lisa McQuiston, CH teacher, JJ Hill Montessori
Hannah Stadler, TA1, Pre-K at Rondo	Angela Weckwerth, CH Teacher, JJ Hill Montessori
Diana Rivard, SPED TA2 (Inclusion) Saint Paul Music Academy	Rachel Stohlmann, ECSE Self-Contained Teacher, Highland Park Elementary
Zachary Forde, TA1, Pre-K at Saint Paul Music Academy	Lori Sherry, Pre-K Teacher, Como Park Elementary
Dallas Robertson, TA1, American Indian Magnet School	Michou Tchoffo, Étoile du Nord French Immersion School
Darya Fidelman, Battle Creek Elementary	Tara Heck, ECSE Teacher, Como Park Elementary
Sharon Moser , Battle Creek Elementary	Madison Wallace, PreK Teacher, Mississippi Creative Arts Elementary
Karen Lang, Hamline Elementary	Jill Maxe, Pre-K Teacher, Como Park Elementary
Sharon Furth, Galtier Elementary	Nikki Groves, ECSE teacher, Cherokee Heights
Anita Faltesek, L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion	Miranda Mellstrom, CH Teacher, Cherokee Heights
Elise Lindell, L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion	Emily Tinetti, ECSE Pre-K, Pre-K at Rondo, Frost Lake Elementary
Megan Aanonsen, Eastern Heights Elementary	Kelsey Hennessey, Pre-K teacher, American Indian Magnet School
Janet Manor, Four Seasons A+ Elementary	Julia Goodwin, TA1 PreK EXPO Elementary
Nicole Schueller Farnsworth Lower	Cynthia Flynn, CH Teacher, JJ Hill Montessori
Sara Birkeland, Maxfield Elementary	Shannon Erickson, ECSE, Highland Park Elementary
Mary Weir, TA1, Maxfield Elementary	Cheryl Parker, Pre-K TA2 at Pre-K at Rondo
Shannon Newby, CH teacher, Nokomis Montessori North	Kammi O'Hara, Pre-K Teacher at Benjamin E. Mays
Taylor Amigon, CH teacher, Nokomis Montessori North	Shannon Langenfeld, ECSE Teacher, SPMA and Phalen
Tonia Schmitz, CH teacher, Nokomis Montessori North	Shevie Brooks, CH TA1, JJ Hill Montessori
McKenna Johnson, Children's House Teacher, Nokomis Montessori North	Megan Tedder, CH EL Teacher, JJ Hill Montessori
Cathy Grundhauser, Frost Lake Elementary	Rachel Boettcher, ECSE Teacher, JJ Hill Montessori
Mary Morgan, Global Arts Plus Lower	Nathan "Al" Nowatzki, TA1 at JJ Hill Montessori
Emma Musachio, Global Arts Plus Lower	Susie Toohey, TA1 at JJ Hill Montessori
Lauren Gilbert, TA1, Global Arts Plus Lower	Leonard Madsen, Music teacher, JJ Hill Montessori
Ying Khang, EA1, Global Arts Plus Lower	
Emily Campbell (ECSE Pre-K) Global Arts Lower and Expo	
Ana Miranda, Riverview Elementary	

Micaela Dove, Mississippi Elementary	Ruth Gregory, E1 teacher, J.J. Hill Montessori
Daniel Schwarze, Pre-K Prep at Maxfield and American Indian Magnet	Katherine Shasky, Pre-K teacher, Expo Elementary
Lisa Arcand, Pre-K at Riverview Elementary	Jackie Matzke, Pre-K Teacher, Groveland Park Elementary
Plia Vang, Pre-K Teacher at Bruce Vento	Tuajntxiag Xiong, Pre-K TA at The Heights Community School
Lisa Arcand, Pre-K at Riverview Elementary	Teresa Vogelgesang, Pre-K Teacher at Highland Park Elementary
Plia Vang, Pre-K Teacher at Bruce Vento	Laurie Steiner Weestrand, Pre-K Teacher at Highland Park Elementary

**The hybrid model has not thought through scheduling in-person days for each group. From Nov 16-Dec 22, Mon/Tues students will receive 12 days of in-person instruction, while Wed/Thurs students will receive only 8 days of in-person instruction. How will this inequity be addressed?**

**Pre-K Development and the ECW Model:**

*The current guidelines (each student at their own table, 6 feet in distance) are not developmentally appropriate for our learners and are not compatible with the Early Childhood Workshop model. Early Childhood Workshop states that classroom learning experiences are linked to the interests and current knowledge of children; they ensure children have the opportunities to interact with materials, other children and supportive adults.*

- What will a day in the life of a Pre-K student look like? How will this be communicated to families?
- What will Morning Meeting & Regroup look like? Will we be required to have Google Meets every day? How would we do that with children distanced in the physical classroom and children at home? How will we manage the tech set up? How will we manage conversations and track who wants to talk?
- How do we teach Small Groups? Will students be able to sit at the table together? Will they be able to share manipulatives and materials?
- What will Active Learning look like? What are the rules about shared manipulatives and materials? Does each child have individual kits of manipulatives and materials for the day? If so, who is assembling these and providing the materials to make the kits?
- What will recess look like? What sanitizing protocols are in place? Do children wear masks? How can children engage with each other?
- How do we walk in the hallways?
- How do we teach Pre-K without singing?
- How do we support hands-on learning?

**Social Emotional Learning:**

*Supporting students in social emotional development is the core of Pre-K and it requires closeness and affection (hugs, holding hands, sitting in laps, wiping tears). What will this look like in a socially distanced classroom? How can we truly support this development while wearing masks and maintaining 6 feet of distance?*

-How do we console a child who is experiencing big emotions? How can we co-regulate with students?

-How will behavioral issues be dealt with? If children have a physical altercation with another student or a child needs help making a safe choice, how will teachers provide that support and maintain social distance?

-How do we support children who may be a flight risk if there is no hand holding during transitions?

-How do we fully support a student who has huge trauma needs during the day with possibilities of extreme and high risk behaviors?

-Will there be a breakspot/alone zone/calm corner? If so, does it need to be cleaned between each child? By whom and with what?

-What will the teaching and practicing of social skills look like when students are separated and not able to share, trade and take turns with materials or interact with each other?

### **Montessori Specific:**

*Our environment is considered to be a teacher and children choose their work. How do we maintain the basic core of our Montessori environment with the restrictions?*

-Montessori Children's House needs to teach kindergartners in Guided Reading groups. What will that look like?

-How do we sanitize Montessori materials? Many of them are made of wood and/or are painted. They can't be sprayed down or easily washed like plastic.

-Toys and works are intended to be open for all children to use, so do we sanitize between every child's use? If so, where, with what, and by who?

-Montessori classrooms are multiage classrooms with Pre-K and K together. Will our TAs work in the classroom with us even when we have ½ of our students?

-Will Pre-K and K still be moving together to specialists and other parts of the day? What will this look like?

### **ECSE:**

-How will ECSE services be provided? Will teachers come to the room? Will they pull out or push in sessions?

-How will classes be divided, taking into account kids with IEPs whose teachers are in multiple buildings? Will all students with IEPs attend school on the same days? Will the class size be lower on those days to account for the additional staff in the room?

### **Personal Care:**

*Students are working toward independence in Pre-K. Some students can perform self-help skills without assistance, but many are still learning and are unable to manage on their own, especially at the beginning of the school year/in person learning.*

- How will we support students in zipping/snapping/buttoning winter gear while maintaining 6ft social distance?
- How do we deal with snotty noses and yucky sneezes inside masks? How do we maintain 6ft distance while assisting?
- Will we get a supply of gloves (and other PPE) so we can stay safe when helping children?
- Will portable sinks be provided for classrooms without handwashing stations?
- What accommodations will be provided for the sinks that are too high for our students?
- How will our students access soap and paper towel dispensers that are not usable or reachable by our students?

### **Rest:**

- How will 10 cots fit in the room along with 10 tables?
- Will blankets be allowed? Who will provide them? Where will they be stored? When will they be washed? How often?
- Will the cots/mats be sanitized every day? If so, where, by who, and with what?
- Do children wear masks when they rest? Is it safe to wear masks when napping? Is it safe to not wear masks when napping?

### **Families:**

- Are Pre-K families aware of what the classroom will look like, the rules about shared materials, and the expectation to be separated at different tables all day?**  
How/when will families be informed of this?
- Will parents be allowed in the classroom? What will happen if students are having separation issues at the beginning of hybrid?
- Are families aware that students will be participating in Seesaw learning and sitting at tables while in school?

### **Meals:**

- Will students eat breakfast/lunch/snacks in the classroom?
- Who will clean after meals? When? With what supplies?
- We have heard food will all be single serve and prepackaged. Most Pre-K students need assistance opening packaging, especially at the beginning of the year. Will we be able to assist them? How will we assist while maintaining 6ft distance? If not, how will they eat?

### **Bathrooming:**

- Who will help with students who have accidents? Is that an expectation of teachers/TAs or nurses who are equipped with PPE? Will Pre-K teachers be provided with PPE to help students who have accidents?

- What will students do in the classrooms without a bathroom? What about the toilets that aren't covered and particles spray with each flush?
- Are classroom embedded bathrooms cleaned between children, and if so by who? Is there a protocol for how long to wait before another child can use the classroom bathroom?

### **Masks:**

- Are Pre-K students required to wear a mask? What about in a Montessori Children's House classroom with Pre-K and K students together in the same classroom? What happens when a student celebrates a birthday and turns 5?
- Will children with sensory issues be expected to wear masks?
- If masks are not required, how do we ensure air filtration systems are provided.
- There is also concern about the level of rigor teachers can provide while wearing masks. Are we going to spell words with masks on? How do we teach phonetic awareness skills when the students can't see how our mouths move to make the sounds?

### **Staffing:**

- How will shared staff (specialists, coaches, ESCE, OT, PT, etc) support each site while moving from buildings? -What will the protocol be if one of these staff are exposed to the virus and bring it to multiple school sites?
- Will our TAs remain with us despite a lower number of students in the classroom each day?
- Depending on how many families choose Virtual School, is there a risk that our TA's would be pulled out for other duties if our classroom student numbers go down?
- How does the district see the role of the Pre-K TA? What is their job description during hybrid learning?

### **Cleaning and Sanitizing:**

- Will half day classrooms continue to have different students for AM and PM? If so, who is cleaning and sanitizing the room and materials after each session? When? With what?
- What is the protocol for sanitizing manipulatives, toys, and other materials? How often do these need to be sanitized? By whom, with what, and when will this be done?
- If going back and forth between home and school, do the iPads need to be sanitized every morning? If so, who does it?

### **Teacher Workload and Responsibilities:**

- Can coaches or non-classroom teachers provide us with Seesaw lessons/activities for DL days as we are providing lessons/activities inside the classroom?
- How and when will teachers be able to connect with families specifically about attendance issues? Are other staff available to make calls?
- How will specialists work? Are teachers still getting a daily prep time?

-How do we manage Seesaw for students at home while teaching the students present at school?

-Will we be expected to attend in person meetings? The longer the day is the more we are exposed. What about those buildings with small spaces which staff meet?

-Craig Anderson explained at a recent union meeting that teachers should plan and upload lessons and learning opportunities on Seesaw 5 days/ week and use the in person time as a bonus to do Morning Meeting, Small Group lessons, and assessments. This caused confusion. What does it mean for Pre-K? What does that look like?

### **Non Pre-K Specific Concerns:**

-Will iPads be going from school to home every day? Will we be responsible for charging students' iPads every day or will families be expected to send them every day fully charged? What happens when a student does not bring their iPad?

-Can the district guarantee that siblings will all attend school on the same A day or B day?

-If students arrive on the 'wrong' day, where will they remain until a parent arrives? Where will they stay if a parent can't pick them up?

-Will the district provide a stipend for teachers to buy scrubs and/or shoes that will be designated for school?

-Will free childcare be provided for SPPS teachers who have students in older grades that are now home alone?

-Will teachers and TA's receive hazard pay?

-Who is in charge of setting up our learning spaces?

**-Will the district provide adaptations for teachers who are hearing impaired?**

These include masks for children and teachers that have windows. Listening to children through masks in a Pre-K/K environment where they are practicing letter sounds and learning to read will be a challenge. Can we bluetooth teacher iPad/laptop to teacher hearing aides?

### **Exposure and Quarantining**

**-The CDC has made it clear that poor ventilation spreads the virus well beyond 6 feet indoors even with masks being used.** What will be done to make classrooms safe due to ventilation concerns? Classrooms that are open due to pods? Classrooms with no windows? Will individual classrooms or pods be given hepa system air purifiers? Do families know about the possibility of spreading the virus due to poor ventilation?

-What will the protocol for quarantine be if a teacher is exposed? What about a student from Group A?

-If a teacher/TA is exposed or has to quarantine, will they be expected to use their own sick time?

-If a teacher/TA is exposed at another situation or site, will they be expected to use their own sick time?

- If a sibling's class is exposed and has to quarantine, will siblings in other grades be asked to stay home as well? What about the sibling's class?
- How are we keeping students safe on buses? Will there be an aid on each bus making sure students stay in their designated seat? What is the protocol for bussing if a student has been exposed? Will all other students on that bus be quarantined?
- How is exposure data communicated to families? How does contact tracing work in the building, and who will be doing that?
- How will students be cleared to come into the building every day?
- What is the process if we see COVID like symptoms in a child? How is that reported? How is that child tested? Will nurses have access to COVID testing on site?

### Subs

- What is protocol for subs, both for virus exposure and other illness or personal reasons?
- Are there subs available for teachers?
- Will there be subs for TAs who need to miss school or quarantine?
- Is there a plan to cover custodians who are absent? In the past, when a custodian was absent the work didn't get done (vacuuming, etc.) The rest of the cleaning team after school would work short-handed.



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