



Middleton-Cross Plains
Area School District
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Comments for the Board Meeting

1 message

Holly Dregne <hdregne@mcpasd.k12.wi.us>

Tue, Aug 4, 2020 at 3:16 AM

To: Board <board@mcpasd.k12.wi.us>, Dana Monogue <dmonogue@mcpasd.k12.wi.us>, Aly Xiong <axiong@mcpasd.k12.wi.us>

Cc: Robert Schell <rschell@mcpasd.k12.wi.us>

Dear Dr. Monogue, Mr. Xiong, and members of the Board of Education,

I am writing to share some of my thoughts from the past few weeks. I have proudly worked in our district for 15 years and in that time, I have seen and understood a lot about the community that surrounds our district. This community values being the best in every way. Because of that value, I have been proud to be a teacher here and have consistently felt respected by our leadership team and the Board. As we prepare to return to school amidst a global pandemic, I truly appreciated the Board's work to ensure the safety of our students' physical health.

This past week, I had to question whether I was respected for the first time in several years. I was literally blindsided by the emails that came from Dr. Monogue and Mr. Xiong's office this week as were many of my colleagues. Initially, I was upset at the lack of foreshadowing for such a significant change to our work environment expectations but with time, I've realized that what truly upset me was the lack of educator support either email provided.

As a parent and teacher in the district, I received 3 emails from Dr. Monogue and Mr. Xiong. In the communications, phrases like "increased rigor," "synchronous learning experiences," "access to educators," as well as "meaningfully engaged," were very narrow in scope considering all that was done in the spring to ensure we pivoted in the most successful way possible. In spring, we were guided by our administrators to provide no new content, focus on social-emotional learning, to avoid synchronous learning experiences as they will exacerbate equity issues in our district. I understand that staff were not equally engaged with home-based teaching and learning but that does not diminish the hard work that most of us did to maintain as much normalcy as possible for our students.

As educators, we are highly educated individuals who should be respected as such. The explanations provided through email last week of the different leaves available to us with phrases like "a generalized concern that it is not safe to return to work will generally not be sufficient to qualify as a disability" added in were unprofessional and unwarranted. It is between a staff member and their health care providers which type of leaves may fit their individual situation. It is important that our human resources department shares that type of information without judgment or caveats. Admitting one has a disability or that one's child has a disability are life altering events and the idea that our staff would take advantage of that situation in order to alleviate a "general feeling of uneasiness" shames us. As a parent of a child with a significant disability, this was particularly insulting.

I have empathy for your position as district leaders to attempt to bring all sides together and I am sure you heard from a great number of families in the past week or so about all the ways teachers did not meet expectations in the spring. However, the lack of acknowledgment in these decisions and communications that our teachers did meet the expectations laid out by district leadership in the spring leaves teachers feeling at the very least, unsupported. Truthfully, for me, the lack of support for our teachers was hurtful.

Moving forward, I would ask that MEA be included in decisions about our work expectations as the leadership team with MEA is well connected to educators at all levels. MEA understands the nuances of our

positions and the families with whom we work. If decisions are made without MEA, those decisions will likely be narrow in focus and will miss details that a district of our size must acknowledge.

I am also requesting that the Board of Education consider offering educators flexibility in our work environment. None of the colleagues with whom I have spoken were intending to teach 100% from home while our students are in a virtual model of instruction. We were, however, assuming that we would be able to make our own schedules to decrease our likelihood of exposing ourselves to others in our school buildings. At Elm Lawn, we will have 50+ educators in our building at one time each day. I was recently at school and I see a new HVAC system is in place but no one has communicated if the HVAC systems have been updated with new filters to ensure air is not recycled between rooms. Having taught across the hall from the kitchen for years, I am acutely aware of how much air is recycled between rooms in our building. I am very concerned about my own health and safety as I return to the building daily for 5+ hours. For me, this is not a "general uneasiness" but rather a real fear for my son whose disability significantly impacts his respiratory system. He has been happily isolated with me since March in order to protect him from the virus. As a single mother, this is the best I will be able to offer because there is currently no flexibility in my work expectations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Holly Dregne

9 August, 2020

Dear Members of the MPCASD Board of Education, Superintendent, and District Administrators,

I am writing to request that a new choice be added to the existing two options presented to families for the 2020-2021 school year. It was clear during the two Q&A sessions last week that parents were confused about the all-virtual option. I, like many parents I've communicated with, assumed that the all-virtual option would offer exactly the same learning experience as that offered to families that intended to return to in-person school if it became safe to do so.

Upon learning that the all-virtual option has a completely different curriculum and much less synchronous learning / social interaction than the Universal option, every parent I've spoken with has decided to opt for the Universal plan to start with. Many of these parents were originally planning to keep their child at home for the duration of the school year. Because they are not comfortable with the all-virtual FLVS option, these parents are now taking the chance that schools will not open in-person this year anyway, or that the district will "figure something out" if school returns to in-person and they are not comfortable sending their children back at that time.

To me, this translates into a huge planning risk for the district, and a liability to children's uninterrupted education this year. It suggests that the classes that are initially assigned this fall are likely to be thrown into complete chaos if/when schools return to a hybrid or in-person model.

Many other school districts around the nation (such as Miami-Dade, information on other districts can be found [here](#)) are offering a fully-online, district-taught, synchronous learning option to their families. Here is what I suggest that would look like in our district:

- Families that want an online, district-taught option for the entire year agree to forgo district bussing should school return to in-person
- Entire classes of grade school children who expect to learn from home all year are assigned a district teacher at their grade level who also expects to teach online all year (synchronous, MCPASD curriculum)
- For middle or high-school students that have classes with different teachers throughout the day, students would be assigned a section which correlates with their expected status (online all year vs. returning if schools open)
- Same class size limits for each district-taught option (online all year vs. possible in-person)
- Teachers are not guaranteed to be from a child's normally assigned school (in case numbers don't work out) but are guaranteed to be qualified MCPASD teachers at their grade-level (e.g., could be Kromrey or Glacier Creek teachers)

I believe this option can only benefit both district administrators and families for the following reasons:

- Prevents most students from having their learning disrupted if/when some classes return to in-person school
- Protects the district from having to reassign classes / develop new last-minute options if in-person school resumes and parents are uncomfortable enough with that decision to keep their children at home at that point

- Gives MCPASD a more accurate headcount of the number of students they are likely to have to provide transportation and classroom space for if school should return to in-person (i.e., huge planning benefits)
- Families that request this option receive uninterrupted, synchronous learning, and MCPASD curriculum all year – potentially less catch-up when everyone does return to school next year
- Children get to know their teacher and classmates well – more consistency and social support
- Grade school staff that are already unwilling to return to in-person school could be assigned a fully online year of instruction, reducing the risk of mid-year staffing losses
- Families are less likely to make changes at trimester/semester (i.e., added planning benefits)

It seems likely that MCPASD will end up needing to reassign some students to classrooms which remain online (and potentially reassign/combine other classrooms as a result) if/when schools physically reopen. The option presented above would enable much of that reorganization to occur ahead of the school year, reducing the amount of last-minute scramble and chaos that will otherwise occur mid-year.

I understand that there are no perfect solutions to the uncertainty that we all face this year, and am incredibly grateful for the time and effort that you have all invested into making the 2020-2021 school year as successful as it can be.

Thanks so much for your time and consideration.

Warmest wishes,

Amalia