

January 15, 2021 Special Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Wednesday, January 13th and Tuesday, January 19th
Submitted via Written Comments Form

1	Attached is the Jordan Community School Local School Council's resolution voicing our concerns about the current CPS re-opening plan. Thank you for considering our community's desire to stop the plan for returning to in-person learning in January and February and instead work together with LSCs, parents, community organizations, and the Chicago Teachers Union to create a plan that is safe, equitable, and instills trust for all parties.
2	Please delay the opening of Chicago Public Schools buildings. It is not safe.
3	Please delay the opening of Chicago public schools. It is not safe.
4	Please let staff who have zero in-person students work from home effective immediately. The first case of COVID that emerged at McCutcheon was the week before students entered the building, and now McCutcheon has a cluster. CPS WIFI is very weak, the echoes and feedback from team teachers are distorting, and parents of children with special needs are complaining that their children are not able to see and hear their teachers clearly. CPS student families are deeply disturbed that teachers of 100% remote classes are being forced into the buildings, and that teachers who put safety first are being locked out and separated from their students. Families are watching this inhumane treatment on camera daily. All in-person staff should be working on a voluntary basis until a vaccine is widely available and distributed.
5	Please delay the unsafe reopening plan and give individual schools more autonomy and choice to do what is best when reopening. School team should be able to establish schedules along with telework and e-learning options for both students and staff. The current plan is not equity, equity is not a one size fits all approach. Equity gives everyone what they need to be successful- and that looks different for every school.
6	Please halt in person learning. It is not benefiting anyone! Over 30 schools have confirmed Covid cases since Monday. That's insane and only going to grow fast. Teachers and students are not irreplaceable. We are in the middle of a pandemic that CPS callously does not care about the thousands of it's employees. And that is plain and simple. The public knows the lies and rhetoric that the mayor and Janice Jackson are lying about. They need to halt the in person learning and come out on top of this whole fiasco. Restore every teacher's account and apologized. Then we can all move on from this dark time, And continue to teach our students safely. This time period will forever be remembered as a dictator move from the school board. They are no better than the one who is going to stand trial for impeachment.
7	The Chicago Public Reopening Plan is flawed and doesn't keep teacher, staff and children safe.
8	Please delay the opening of schools. It is not the right time and it is not safe for students, their families, and staff.
9	Please delay the opening of Chicago public schools. There is no reason to put so many families at risk right now when the vaccine is here.
10	I am writing to express concern around Chicago Public Schools Reopening Plan. It simply is not safe enough right now with the increased numbers of COVID cases and potentially two mutant strains that are disproportionately affecting children. We must keep our children, our families, everyone as safe as possible at this time- we are in a pandemic!
11	Please delay the reopening of CPS until vaccination is more widespread or until the level of community spread has been controlled. At our current positivity rates of approximately

	10%, we are at the highest risk of transmission in schools, per CDC guidelines: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/indicators.html#thresholds
12	Please delay the reopening of Chicago Public School Buildings. It is not safe.
13	Please delay the school reopening plans as it is not safe for students to return at this time.
14	Please delay the return to in-person instruction for Chicago Public Schools. It is unsafe. Protect all children, staff, and families. And stop punishing teachers who are working remotely instead of returning to unsafe buildings.
15	Please stop this unsafe opening. The number of cases in buildings in just 4 days is insane
16	Delay the reopening of Chicago Public Schools.
17	Please delay opening our schools. There have been covid cases in schools already and it's going to get worse when we open schools to thousands more. It is not worth losing a life when we are so close to getting teachers vaccinated. Too many lives have been taken already...please do the right thing for our children, families and teachers. Thank you.
18	Please delay the reopening of Chicago Public School Buildings. It is not safe.
19	Why are you ok with putting students and families lives at risk? Not all cos schools are equipped to open. Furthermore everything being started by the district is contradicting what we see. In policy we were told and we removed all carpets in our classrooms but the mayor's social media account show classrooms with carpets in the room.
20	Why is CPS still planning in-person learning with positivity rates close to 20%? It is not safe, even as the city says. We are still in a Stay-at-Home Advisory AND it was extended! Please don't re-open. My child is finally doing well with RL and we want to keep ourselves and others safe! At least, wait until more of the city, and especially our teachers, can get vaccinated.
21	<p>COVID-19 Variant Concerns</p> <p>(https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/cdc-variant-covid-19-strain-likely-circulating-many-states)</p> <p>On 1/7/21, CIDRAP-Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy reported that CDC officials told the Washington Post they suspect the mutant variant is present in most states, and will become more common in the coming weeks. The variant is thought to be 50% more contagious than the strain that originated in Wuhan, China, 1 year ago, but so far it does not seem to cause more severe illness or symptoms.</p> <p>On 1/3/21 during Face the Nation Former FDA Commissioner and Board member of Pfizer, Scott Gottlieb said:</p> <p>(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission/variant-cases.html https://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-scott-gottlieb-discusses-coronavirus-on-face-the-nation-january-3-2021/)</p> <p>DR. GOTTLIEB: "Well, we're not vaccinating quickly enough to create a backstop against the spread of this new variant. Right now, there's some estimates that the new-new variant probably represents about 1% of all infections in this country. By March, it's going to be the majority of infections. "</p>

On 1/6/21, WebMD Health News reported:
(<https://www.webmd.com/lung/news/20210107/new-covid-super-strains-could-disrupt-life-again>)

Ashish Jha, MD, dean of the Brown School of Public Health, projected on Tuesday that as the new strains take hold in the U.S., they could cause an additional 10 million new infections by the end of February and as many as 150,000 more deaths.

A new report (<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/mrc-global-infectious-disease-analysis/covid-19/report-42-sars-cov-2-variant/>) from Imperial College London found that a greater proportion of children were infected with the new strain, compared to the older version of the virus. It's not clear yet if its mutations make it better at infecting children, or if younger people were just more likely to be exposed to it because kids have continued to go to school there, even as many adults have stayed home.

Because the virus is becoming more potent, we will need stricter measures to control its spread.

In recent days, some public health experts, like former CDC Director Tom Frieden, MD, who now leads the nonprofit Resolve to Save Lives, said it might be a good idea for people to wear more protective masks -- like surgical masks or N95 respirators, though these still may be in short supply across the country.

Harvard's Marc Lipsitch said: "The U.K. has decided to close schools, and I think we might find ourselves there in not too long. "

(<https://www.vox.com/22220301/covid-spread-new-strain-variants-safe-grocery-store-n95-masks-vaccine>)

1/14/21

The advantage the new variants carry seems to be that in any given situation where people are gathered, they'll infect more people — an estimated 30 to 70 percent more people in the case of the B.1.1.7 variant first identified in Britain, which has now been identified in 50 countries. (1/13/21 <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/global-covid-rise-continues-50-nations-report-b117-variant>)

B.1.1.7 is already believed to be circulating at low levels across the US. (1/13/21 <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/01/13/956504515/u-k-variant-could-drive-a-new-surge-in-the-u-s-experts-warn?t=1610619227558>)

While these variants haven't been shown to be more deadly, a more transmissible virus is actually worse in many ways than a more lethal one. Cases snowball at a faster rate, Harvard epidemiologist Marc Lipsitch said on a recent press call. With a 50 percent rise in infectiousness, for example, "in less than two weeks, you get twice the number of cases," Lipsitch said. "And in a month or so, you have four, five times as many cases. But that's very approximate." (<https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/22215121/new-variants-contagiousness-covid-coronavirus>)

(<https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/new-variant-of-covid-19-dominant-in-us-reportedly-discovered-by-ill-researchers/2416498/>)

New Variant of COVID-19 'Dominant in US' Reportedly Discovered by Ill. Researchers
Published January 14, 2021 • Updated on January 14, 2021 at 1:13 pm

A new, possibly "more transmissible" variant of COVID-19 that is specific to the United States, believed to be behind half of the country's coronavirus cases, has been reported by Illinois researchers.

Dr. Marielle Fricchione, medical director at the Chicago Department of Public Health, said health officials believe the strain causing problems in the U.K. is "likely circulating already" in the city.

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- 22 I am writing to let you know that CPS is starting to retaliate against teachers who are exercising their legal right to refuse to work in unsafe work conditions. These teachers, who have been continuing to work remotely since last week, are now being locked out from their CPS accounts, and are being blocked from providing instruction to their students, simply because they are exercising their right to refuse unsafe work conditions. This is a violation of the CTU collective bargaining agreement, and is a violation of the Discrimination against Employees under OSHA Act of 1970, 1977.12.
- Please reinstate these teachers and delay the reopening of CPS. It is not safe. It is not safe. It is not safe.
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- 23 Please consider how going will impact our English Language Learners. Many of their families have been impacted by Covid and have chosen to remain remote. For students that already struggle to understand and speak a new language, adding in having to understand a teacher wearing a mask, often through a screen, will make it much harder to give them the education they deserve.
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- 24 Remaining 6 ft from students is unrealistic... especially staff that must remain in close proximity with students... SECAS (Special Education Classroom Assistants) are required to perform personal care for students such as toileting, feeding and dressing. Several schools do not have safe environments to safely service students. Remote learning is safe for students as well as school staff. Please keep schools closed until there is a cure for Covid-19.
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- 25 Please delay the reopening of schools, and close them for the PreK and Sp Ed students. Too many buildings have covid cases already in such a short time. It is not safe for anyone. Vaccines are coming soon.
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- 26 Please delay the reopening of Chicago Public Schools until staff are vaccinated or thr positivity rate is below 5%, or make it completely voluntary for all staff.
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- 27 Please delay the reopening of Chicago Public Schools, it is not safe.
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- 28 Please delay the reopening of Chicago Public Schools. It is not safe.
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- 29 Please delay the reopening of Chicago Public Schools. It is not safe. I am in Wave 1 as a preschool teacher and have gone back to teach 1 student in person and 12 online at a school with nearly 90% Hispanic population. Please listen to our families and school communities who are telling us they want to keep their child safe at home and continue with remote learning.
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- 30 The Board of Education is making a mistake ordering schools to re-open during this pandemic.
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- 31 delay return in person until teachers, students and their families are vaccinated
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- 32 Please keep buildings closed. Too many people are dying. Remote learning is a better option than death.

33	Please delay the opening of CPS schools until it is safe. At this point, the plan is flawed and will put students', families' and staff's lives at risk.
34	Make staff return to buildings voluntary
35	Please delay the re-opening! It is unsafe and not based in science.
36	I'm the mother of former CPS students and the grandmother of current CPS students. I strongly oppose CPS' rush to reopen schools when Covid-19 is surging. It is ill-conceived and poorly justified, and puts students and staff at risk. You cannot even claim to be doing it for the most at-risk students, since the parents of the vast majority of poor students and students of color have chosen to keep their children at home. Seriously, what are you thinking? Oh, that's right. The process has not been transparent. I have long opposed an elected school board because I believed an appointed board would be more professional. Today I'm writing to my state senator and representative to support an elected school board. You are anything but professional.
37	Delay the reaping of CPS. It is not safe. 33 plus schools already have cases. Allow teachers to be vaccinated. Safe reopening or no reopening!
38	Make staff return voluntary or delay opening until vaccination is possible for all teachers
39	Delay reopening until it is safe.
40	Schools should wait to open until teachers can be vaccinated.
41	I do not feel safe going back into the building to teach my students. What I am most concerned about, however, is the loss of instructional time all students will lose because of this plan. I do not think this point is being discussed enough. No matter if the child is in person or learning remotely, the teacher will now be split many ways. While not perfect, remote learning is working and I can invest 100% of my time to my remote learning content. I see all students equally. With this new hybrid model I will not be able to dedicate nearly as much time to remote learning, which all students will be doing at least 3 days a week still. This plan is ill thought out and does not address equity at all.
42	Please delay the reopening of Chicago Public Schools buildings. It is not safe.
43	Please delay the return to in-person learning, it is not safe for staff, students and in turn their families. Please allow ALL STAKEHOLDERS to have a seat at the table.
44	I'm submitting my written comments as a supplement to the statement I provided during the public comment section of the special Chicago Board of Education Meeting on Jan. 15, 2021. To reiterate, I'm urging CPS to delay school reopening under the current plan and focus on working together with school principals, teachers and staff, and their communities to address the immediate needs of CPS students, families and educators. I also urge CPS to work with principals, teachers & staff, and community representatives to create a flexible reopening plan that prioritizes the needs of our most vulnerable student population, but takes into consideration the differences in resources of the different schools and communities in the CPS system.

ATTACHMENTS



Jordan Community School

Respect

Responsibility

Integrity

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Jordan Community School's Local Council Resolution Regarding the CPS Proposed Return to In-Person Learning

1/12/2021

Whereas the City of Chicago has been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including nearly 200,000 cases recorded and approximately 4,000 deaths from COVID-19 and

Whereas the Chicago Public Schools proposed re-opening plan has not substantially taken into account the voices of teachers, parents, or community who have expressed concerns, and

Whereas the Chicago Public Schools has a documented history of failing to maintain the cleanliness of buildings, and

Whereas schools have been well-known spreaders of disease every year prior to this pandemic, with stomach flu, bedbugs, head lice and other diseases easily spreading in crowded and often poorly ventilated school buildings and

Whereas our school communities include many multi-generational households and therefore students who contract COVID-19 at school and infect a parent or grandparent at home may well suffer trauma and grief that could affect them for life, and

Whereas outbreaks in school may well lead to additional chains of infection in our community which has already been hit hard by the pandemic, and

Whereas we fear that the Chicago Public School's reopening plan will make quality instruction for students who stay remote as well as those who come in-person more difficult, given that teachers will have to simultaneously manage a classroom and teach online to students at home, and

Whereas this year has been one of trauma, instability and mourning for many of our young people who need consistency rather than interruption to routines they are finally getting used to.

Be it therefore resolved that the Local School Council of Jordan Community School urges the Chicago Public Schools leadership and the Board of Education to halt its plan to return to in-person learning in January and February and instead work together with Local School Councils, parents, community organizations, and the Chicago Teachers Union to create a plan that is safe, equitable and instills trust for all parties.

Be it further resolved that while conditions do not permit a safe return to in-person learning, we urge the district to work with parents and teachers to focus on continuing to improve the quality of remote learning and the needed investments in technology, staffing and other supports to make the best of an exceedingly difficult situation while keeping students, educators and our community safe.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded on to Dr. Janice Jackson, CEO of Chicago Public Schools, all members of the Chicago Board of Education and Alderman Hadden, City Council member for the area served by Jordan Community School.

January 15, 2020

Dear members of the Chicago Board of Education, Dr. Jackson, Chief McDade, and Mayor Lightfoot,

Yesterday, I gave a brief statement during the public comment section of the special Chicago Board of Education Meeting. I wanted to submit a written statement as well, to supplement my two-minute comment.

As a parent of two kindergarteners at New Field Primary School in Rogers Park, who will be remaining home as CPS fully reopens in February, I have been closely following the recent developments related to the reopening plan. Over the past few weeks, I have attended many different meetings on the CPS reopening plan, trying to get all the different sides of the story. This included our school's LSC and TownHall meetings, the CTU meeting, and the City Council Committee on Education meeting earlier this week that hosted CPS representatives (which some of you also attended). I have also spoken with many CPS parents about their hopes, frustrations and fears related to the reopening.

Many of the parents I spoke to have not been paying much attention to the plan, as most of them assumed that due to high COVID positivity and death rates, the recent extension of the Chicago Stay-At-Home order and a [new, more contagious virus variant which is expected to become the dominant form of the coronavirus in the United States by March](#), there is no way CPS school would actually reopen.

As we near the Feb. 1 reopening date, and as some of our youngest students have already returned to school, these parents are now starting to pay more attention and many are concerned about the reopening plan, which many have deemed unsafe and unrealistic.

I do not want to negate all of the work and money that CPS has already put in into trying to prepare our schools for the return of students, teachers and staff. While the effort is greatly appreciated, the plan and its execution falls short in many areas:

- Many schools report that not all of their classrooms have gone through the Indoor Air Quality Assessment. Per the New Field LSC, only 20% of classrooms at our school have been assessed by Specialty Consulting, Inc. – yet, all the classrooms are expected to host teachers, staff and students.
- As noted during the City Council Committee on Education meeting on Monday, Jan. 11, most of the air purifiers that have been installed in classrooms across Chicago are too small for the size of the room they're in. This was brought up both by Aldermen/women, as well as another parent, who provided a public comment and a [written statement](#) at the meeting.
- The plan reduces real-time teacher instruction time for more than 60% of students who opted to remain remote for now. It does not reduce the amount of screen time, which has been a growing concern for many parents, but shifts the ratio of teachers interacting

with students towards independent learning activities, most of them still in front of a screen.

- The idea of simultaneous teaching will further negatively impact remote students, especially the younger ones, who are just starting their educational journey.
- The plan also fails to address the needs of families who chose to keep their kids home for their family's safety, but who are struggling with the current remote set up.

I know that for every “hole” that I point out in the current CPS reopening plan, you can find an expert or a study that will counter that. In the end, that is not productive and does not benefit CPS students in any way.

While I know that CPS and CTU have a long history of having differences, after observing the back and forth between the two parties in the last year, I am concerned that in the end the needs of CPS students and families take a back seat. This is the time for CPS to work together with school principals, teachers and staff and their communities to address the needs of CPS students and get our families through this pandemic safely.

As I mentioned yesterday, I was shocked to hear that principals and teachers had practically no input into the current CPS reopening plan. I have been truly amazed by the work that New Field's Principal and Assistant Principal, teachers and staff have put in to make remote learning work this year. And now when the students and teachers finally hit a groove, CPS is dropping a new plan in their laps and basically saying: “here you go, now go figure this out.” Again.

New Field will not be getting additional custodial help or a full-time nurse. Being a very diverse neighborhood with many families who do not have an option to work from home, families where English is not their first language, and families who live in poverty with no access to internet or technology, our initial community response had about 50% of students returning to school for hybrid instruction. As we near the return to school date, many of these families are now switching to remote option – citing concerns about safety and concerns about in-person instruction in simultaneous mode and classroom protocols needed to ensure safety: like having an open window, lack of interaction with peers, uncertainty about availability of specials, concerns about meal time, among others.

Many parents in my community and across Chicago who hoped to send their kids back to school are now struggling with a choice – whether to keep their kids and families safe or risk their kids falling behind as the current reopening plan cuts down real-time instruction for remote students. Many teachers who are parents of CPS students, are not even given an option to make that choice. With so many of our CPS families experiencing personal loss due to COVID-19 deaths in their communities, financial instability leading to increased food and housing insecurity, and negative physical, mental and cognitive health effects due to social isolation caused by the pandemic, the positive interactions students have with their teachers and peers are often the only source of the much needed stability our kids need during these unprecedented times.

Reopening schools right now will rattle this much needed stability with changes to schedules, mode of instruction, staff shortages and potentially dire consequences resulting from COVID spread in schools. No matter how much money CPS spends to prepare schools for safe reopening, the human factor is always going to be the biggest disruptor of this plan. Current positivity rate in Chicago is 10%. That means for every 10 children, educators and staff returning to school, one of them is likely to be COVID positive. In our children's classroom, which is an inclusion classroom, 15 children, two teachers, one student teacher, one speech therapist, one occupational therapist, and potentially four specials teachers are slated to return to school next month. Based on the current positivity rate, two of those people may be COVID positive and the only thing we can hope for is that they are NOT asymptomatic and if they are among the student population, their parents have the means to keep them at home instead of sending them to school like they often do due to lack of childcare. Personally, this is not a risk I am willing to take, but I also have the means to keep our children safe at home and engaged in school activities without having to worry about paying our bills and putting food on our table.

Many other families do not have that luxury or even if they do, remote learning is not working for their children for many different reasons. Instead of pushing for blanket reopening of schools that have vastly different resources at the height of a global pandemic, I strongly urge CPS to work with their schools and with communities to provide solutions that will improve remote learning and address the needs of families who cannot stay remote:

- Expand the learning hubs program, provide more resources for teachers and families like materials, manipulatives and technology,
- Provide more support staff for students who need it and to give teachers time for professional development
- Adjust the academic curriculum and standardized testing so teachers can focus on connecting with their students and moving through the program at an adjusted pace when instruction time and style have changed so much
- Work with teachers to accommodate their families' needs to prevent staffing shortages

I know it is impossible to meet everyone's needs, especially for an organization servicing hundreds of thousands of people. Let's stop trying to proceed with business as "normal," work together on solutions to protect the most vulnerable in our communities and get through this crisis.

Respectfully,
Kate Jablonski