

Subject: Re: Extension of School Day

From: "Michele E. Collins" <micheleecollins@gmail.com>

Date: 4/28/2021, 11:04 AM

To: Mary Ellen Walker <WalkerM@middletownk12.org>

CC: "Caminitil@middletownk12.org" <Caminitil@middletownk12.org>, "Caponefr@middletownk12.org" <Caponefr@middletownk12.org>, "Donlonm@middletownk12.org" <Donlonm@middletownk12.org>, "Giaimot@middletownk12.org" <Giaimot@middletownk12.org>, "Heffernanh@middletownk12.org" <Heffernanh@middletownk12.org>, "Littlej@middletownk12.org" <Littlej@middletownk12.org>, "Minnuiesj@middletownk12.org" <Minnuiesj@middletownk12.org>, "Tobaccoj@middletownk12.org" <Tobaccoj@middletownk12.org>, "Wrightd@middletownk12.org" <Wrightd@middletownk12.org>, Doug Covert <covert@middletownk12.org>, Carey Albanese <albanesec@middletownk12.org>, Brian Dorgan <dorganb@middletownk12.org>, James Rasmussen <rasmussenj@middletownk12.org>, Steven Trudell <trudells@middletownk12.org>, Matthew Kirkpatrick <kirkpatrickm@middletownk12.org>

Hi,

Just following up on the two questions that I asked during the public comment of the BOE meeting last night:

1. Will vaccinated students need to quarantine if they are exposed in school to a COVID + person? If so, please provide the rationale for this.
2. Will you not be notifying parents/health department of exposure to a COVID + student during lunch period? It has been stated that since they will be 6 feet apart, there should be no impact to our community despite the studies that have shown that people sitting more than 6 feet apart from infected people in restaurants have contracted COVID. If this is the case, please provide the rationale for this.

Thank you,
Michele Collins

On Mon, Apr 19, 2021 at 3:54 PM Mary Ellen Walker <WalkerM@middletownk12.org> wrote:

Dear Mrs. Collins,

Thank you for sharing your concerns about the plan to implement a full day schedule with lunch on May 10. I would like to further explain our reasons for a return to a full day schedule.

Returning to a full day schedule with lunch will increase instructional time significantly. Students will get the approximate equivalent of an additional full week or more of instruction in just five weeks. Our testing data has revealed real gaps in student learning and more students in danger of failing due to the reduced instructional time. Providing extended time for students to learn in the classroom with their teachers and peers will provide additional support to help all of our students succeed.

We have been moving through our Restart and Recovery Plan since September. At each step we have put a priority on the health and safety of our students and staff, and have reviewed the health data with our public health and medical consultants. We have been successful in moving forward with

our plan to this point. We will continue to follow these steps to safeguard student and staff health and safety as we move to the end of our plan.

Our principals will be providing parents with specific information regarding their school's lunch procedures in a few weeks. These plans are still being finalized. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the procedures for lunch that were developed by the principal and the school Pandemic Response Team of each school, please reach out to Mr. Covert. Each school's plan is unique based on their master schedule, in-person enrollments, facilities, staffing, and other factors.

I appreciate that you have taken the time to articulate your concerns. The district is also deeply grateful for the support of our parents and the large number of families who have chosen to follow the health guidelines throughout this health emergency. It has been integral to keeping our schools open during this school year.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Walker

Superintendent of Schools
Middletown Township Public Schools
732-671-3850 Ext. 1002

On Mon, Apr 19, 2021 at 10:40 AM Michele E. Collins <micheleecollins@gmail.com> wrote:

I'm writing because I'm extremely concerned that the district has agreed to open for full days at the high school level starting in May. I can understand the benefits to this at the elementary level, but for high school there are only potential disasters: senior events being cancelled, proms, graduation, & sports being cancelled, upperclassman being forced into a mandatory quarantine and missing out on important events, etc. Today, April 19, 16+ are finally eligible to be vaccinated. It is extremely reckless to "test this plan out" on our community before everyone has had a chance to be vaccinated who wants to. You are risking students bringing this disease home to parents and grandparents so that you can make sure things run smoothly in September??? Unacceptable. High school students do not need to have their routine disrupted and risk disastrous consequences due to exposure in an unmasked environment while students are eating (one of the riskiest things you can do). Students are not staying home when they have symptoms and parties are still occurring every weekend. Please rethink this. You will be forcing many happy in person students into a 100% virtual environment due to fear of exposure and quarantine. Isn't this the opposite of what you want?

Michele Collins
Mom to 2 South Students

On Fri, Mar 5, 2021 at 3:34 PM Mary Ellen Walker <WalkerM@middletownk12.org> wrote:

Dear Mr. Collins,

Thank you for sharing your concerns. I want to stress that we are just beginning the planning stage for extending the school day. We need to plan now in order to be able to implement this when it is

appropriate to do so. The planning stage for this step in our reopening plan will take more time than previous steps as hiring staff includes posting the position, interviewing, criminal background checks, and Board approval.

Right now we are focusing on completing phase 6, which has not been fully implemented at the elementary or middle schools. We also must implement the step that gives our virtual students the opportunity to participate in-person in our classrooms. We will then work with our public health and medical consultants to review the health data and determine when we can safely implement an extended school day.

Throughout this school year, we have taken a strategic and phased approach to reopening our schools with a focus on student, staff and family health and safety. We will move forward in the same manner as we continue to implement phase 6 and when appropriate, extend the school day.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Walker

Superintendent of Schools
Middletown Township Public Schools
732-671-3850 Ext. 1002

On Fri, Mar 5, 2021 at 3:07 PM Michele E. Collins <micheleecollins@gmail.com> wrote:

Good afternoon,

I'm writing because of the recent letter from Mrs. Walker indicating that the district is in the planning stages of moving forward with allowing kids to eat lunch in school. What is the purpose of taking this huge risk? Even if there is somehow space for students to be 6 feet apart while eating, there is still a very real risk in eating together. There have been many studies where people were infected in restaurants when seated across the room from one another because of air flow and vents. Just because indoor dining is allowed in restaurants or private schools, it doesn't mean it's safe.

The cohorts were just collapsed and within a week, my daughter is on a mandatory quarantine because she was within 6 feet of an infected person in her class. She's had to miss important events because of this quarantine. Thankfully, I'm not so worried about the exposure, because at least everyone was wearing a mask. But having to pivot to virtual instruction for 2 weeks and the stress of being quarantined, has caused many other issues. She learns best when in school and four hours is better than none. If this was during a lunch period, there is a very real risk that my daughter could have actually contracted COVID. For what? So that kids can stay in school for an extra 2 hours? The risk/benefit of this is entirely not worth it. My children do not want to now have to switch to 100% virtual because people want to eat lunch in school. This is outrageous. Please reconsider going forward with this plan.

Thank you,
Michele Collins

| | | Mom of 2 South Students