

Jefferson School District
Official Minutes of the Special Meeting
Of the Board of Trustees
December 1, 2020

(Due to COVID-19, this meeting was held virtually through a Zoom webinar)

Present virtually: Debbie Wingo, President; Phil Raya, Vice President; Dan Wells, Clerk; Brian Jackman, Member; Pete Carlson, Member; Jim Bridges, Superintendent

In attendance virtually: Dena Whittington, Chief Business Officer; Nancie Castro, Director of Human Resources and Curriculum; Angelica Thomas, Director of Special Education; Sarah Steen, Curriculum Coordinator; Christina Orsi, Ken Silman, Emily Stroup, Alyssa Wooten, Principals; Celli Coeville, Administrative Assistant

I. OPEN SESSION

- a. Call to Order at 6:30 PM
- b. Roll Call to Establish Quorum –
- c. Approval of Agenda-
- d. Pledge of Allegiance

MSA (Wells/Raya) – Approve the agenda

Ayes – 5

Nays – 0

Absent – 0

Abstain – 0

Carlson, Jackman,
Raya, Wells, Wingo

II. PUBLIC COMMENT – There were no public comments that were not related to a specific agenda item.

III. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

3.1 JSD Opening to In-Person Instruction Update-

Google Forms were used for public comment for this virtual meeting. Dr. Bridges read all public comments received for this agenda item:

Urvashi Sparman:

I truly believe that we should continue distance learning for those families who wish to do so for the health of their families. On the districts website, 43% of families want to continue distance learning that is almost 50%! Also, 83% of teachers want to continue distance learning. For those students who need to return for many reasons should be allowed to return and have done so already. We should avoid the surge of cases that will come about from the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays. People will not adhere to Covid19 safety precautions during the holidays. I implore you to understand this point and allow us to remain on distance learning as the board is not even meeting in person for this meeting. In addition, only 2% of families want to enroll their children in JVA. To force these families to dis-enroll and then enroll in the JVA would be shutting them out of the routine that is set up now and would completely isolate them and this can cause even more mental challenges. The kids have already adapted to the current distance learning model and can continue to do so until we are in a lower tier. Please do the right thing.

Heather Zogorski:

I'm in disbelief that we are here yet again discussing the option of returning to school. I said during the last meeting that school is essential. I cannot stress this enough. I would like clear and truthful reasons as to why we are not back. I don't want to hear Covid numbers or an argument that if we doing this meeting on zoom then why should we be in class. We all know the numbers and after living like this for the past 9 months we can all agree to disagree on numbers and opinions. We need

to move on with our lives, the survival rate for this is 99%! I understand there are two different views on this and everyone is entitled to their own. However, I also believe that there is VERY little grey area here. You are either at home, and staying home having groceries and essentials delivered or you are comfortable being out and about in public in a safe manner. With this, I feel that the teachers and staff who do not feel comfortable being in their classroom at this point should be given another option. They can take over a class that is 100% DL, there has to be an option for them to work at home while there are in quarantine. Because if they honestly do not feel safe at school with their class in person then that's what they should be doing. They should not be with other family members outside of their home or out shopping. For those teachers that do want to be back in the classroom now should be given the chance to resume as normal. Our children, your students, need to be back in school learning where they are meant to be learning with the professionals who are meant to be teaching them. I understand that there are students whose parents would chose to continue DL for the remainder of the year. That is also perfectly fine. Those groups of students should be put into classes together with a teacher who does not want to come back, forming a new class. Is this ideal to change students and teachers at this point, no, but it's an option that should happen. Let us come back.

CJ:

Hello Dr. Bridges, thank you for your time. I don't know what else to say other than that we need to be given the option to come back to school, in person, on a daily basis. I understand that the hybrid model isn't ideal for a variety of reason. Fine, then come up with something else! Those of us who want to and feel comfortable coming back should have the opportunity. Those that do not, can continue distance learning for the remainder of the year. We also need to be given more info, other than numbers, as to why we are not back? Do teachers not feel safe in their classroom? If so, do they not go to Target or Home Depot (where there are many, many more people) I don't feel that anyone has a leg to stand on in saying that they don't feel safe/comfortable if they are also out and about and/or socializing with other people. You are a teacher and this is your job, so go do it. We all need to live our lives and move on at least a little from this. Education is one of the most essential parts of our lives and at one point we were lucky enough to have the opportunity to have it. Having a kindergartener on the computer for 2.5 hours a day is not what we should be doing. It's not enough and it's not the best scenario to learn these important fundamentals. A year ago how much did we all read about restricting screen time, yet here we are for hours each day. Teaching to read via zoom...I don't even know where to start with that. Parents doing more than helping with math (that they have no clue how to do because for some reason it was changed) is not constructive. The kids and families that want to be in class and feel it is necessary need to be. Others can continue DL or find something that works for them. We need what works for us to happen and its time us to be heard and understood and listened to and given an opportunity.

Patty Hillstead:

Thank you, Dr. Bridges, for your encouragement to "release the anxieties of our world and focus on the treasures you have to be thankful for"; however, this Thanksgiving Break my focus was continually brought back to the anxiety of bringing even more students back into our classrooms as cases soar and we remain in the purple tier. Even though it is not ideal, our students are receiving daily quality lessons which encompass our District curriculum as teachers and students have adapted to Distance Learning. Providing consistency and routine for our students is critical during these ever-changing weeks and I believe returning to school too quickly could result in school closures and a disruption in their learning.

As I spent Thanksgiving away from my loved ones, sending air kisses to my grandchildren and children through video calls, I am reminded that very soon my colleagues, my students, their families, and myself will be exposing ourselves to uncertainty which can be averted by realizing the importance of health and safety for everyone.

I am truly blessed to have my family safe and healthy. As my family and loved ones continue to take the necessary precautions and sacrifices to remain safe and healthy, my expectation is that our

Jefferson School Board will also take all precautions and make sacrifices to keep our family of educators, support staff, administrators, students, and their families safe.

Thank you for your strong consideration of postponing the start date of January 4, 2021, to a date in the future.

Jeanine Cruz, Jefferson Teacher's Association President:

At the November board meeting, you were told that staff were able to give input to how we reopened our schools. And this was true; however, we were asked by the district to give input back in May. Things have changed dramatically since May, and JTA leadership felt it was imperative to survey our staff again to determine how the unit felt regarding reopening our schools.

The results of our survey are as follows: There were 88 unit-members that responded to the survey. The first question asked how the staff felt about opening our schools on January 4th, with the options of the hybrid model or full instruction model, as this were the given scenarios that the Board was going to decide upon. This was an even 50-50 split amongst the unit. The next question asked how the unit felt if we were to return in January, and the county was still in purple, what would be the preference of how to reopen our schools. 83% want to stay in Distance Learning, 13.6% want to return to 100% instruction, and 3.4% want to return to school in the hybrid model. There were also 39 written responses regarding individual concerns.

The reoccurring theme across the majority of the responses are: that as teachers, we know that these models are not the best way to teach our students. However, people want to return when it is SAFE to do so. We need to look at the science behind how is the safest way to proceed during this pandemic, and not give in to the pressure placed on our schools by the parents and the community. We have high risk staff, and COVID cases in San Joaquin county are on the rise. Most of us were not able to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with our families for this reason.

We hear every year that Jefferson School District prides itself on putting our families first. It is our hope that when you vote this evening, that you consider what is best for the safety of everyone. The priority should be the health and safety of the students, teachers, and all staff.

Heather Maloy:

I would like my kids go back to school. They are being highly impacted by the current situation. Please let our kids be kids.

3rd Grader:

My class thinks the school should open back up. One reason is because it is hard to type fast and do all of our work on the computer. Another reason is because we need to be with our teacher so that we can learn better. Finally, when we go to school in person we get more education because we stay longer. All of the students would be very thankful to you if you can open Monticello back up. Thank you.

Kindergarten Student:

I want to go back to school because I want to see my teacher. I want to learn in my classroom with friends. I also want to play on my playground. Thanks.

Jennifer Murphy/Hawkins Teacher:

I am writing to you tonight to discuss reopening options. This is my 21st year teaching with the Jefferson School district. I have just finished my second week of "zooming" and "rooming" after months of distance learning. This has been very challenging overall as a kindergarten teacher. I am asking that we reopen as planned in January. Distance learning and trying to zoom with children in my classroom is in my opinion not conducive to learning. I currently have only 2 students in the classroom but am struggling with assisting them as needed because I am trying to also address the 22 on the screen. Trying to split teach as I am being asked to do does not do justice to the teaching or the learning we all deserve. I believe bringing all students back would allow me to put the children first because I could focus my attention on teaching ALL students. This would be much more conducive to learning than a hybrid because I would not have to worry about zooming and teaching

kids in my room at the same time. Such a hybrid would not allow me to teach the necessary safety protocols effectively and the normal routines and procedures because I would be dividing my time between screen and room. If you chose to not open completely, please consider a model with NO ZOOM and ROOM. Then I can be present and teach the children in my room, something they need desperately after being physically out of school since March. Along with being able to sufficiently teach safety protocols, school routines I would be able to reteach skills to bridge the learning gaps. Please consider returning all students with a modified schedule to help ease the transition and ensure safety. A full return with a 11:45-12:30 dismissal and Wednesday still online. If this is successful, then go to an all week/ all day schedule. If you decide on a hybrid model, please consider no Zoom model so I can teach the students in my classroom.

A teacher/Anonymous:

Dear JSD board members,

I know that you have been faced with many difficult decisions during this time and I appreciate the considerations of the board. I know that many of tonight's comments will be from teachers that do not feel that we should open schools for a variety of personal reasons. I as well am conflicted with knowing that there is risk, but I ask you to greatly consider the needs of our students. As educators we have always stood behind what's in the best interest of students. I am now seeing firsthand the greater need of our students. I have been fortunate enough to have a small group of students back in my classroom and as a teacher, this is my why. I am reminded of how important school is to these students, having the structure and accountability, the camaraderie of students and teacher, just simply a discussion with others without being on mute.

Distance learning is not beneficial academically or emotionally, it's a band aid. I believe teachers are doing the best they can to deliver the best instruction, but we know there is no comparison to what we do in the classroom. There is no guarantee of learning when students are not in our classroom.

There are constant distractions many times not in the control of the student. Many outside factors are taking precedence over school in the home. The academic loss is enormous as well as the emotional toll this is taking. We will see the effects of this learning loss for a very long time to come.

I ask that you take in consideration the needs of our students, just as some teachers need to take into consideration their own needs at this time. If it is not safe for them to return, they need to weigh their options. Families will also need to make their own considerations as to what is best. School is essential, teachers are essential, and we need to move forward and move to reopen schools whether it be in hybrid or in full, if our county allows. Our students are our first priority.

Matt Gordon:

This issue has divided us all. We are divided between coworkers, friends, and family. I'm not going to tell you what you should do because I am on the other side than what most people in California are for. I am though, on the same side as all children and the parents who are struggling to teach their kids. The children are suffering tremendously. It's not about just getting back to class to learn. It is about them interacting with their friends and teachers. The interactions they experience in school is what teaches our kids how to be viable citizens in society when they grow up. It teaches them to overcome their fears and learn how to deal with confronting situations in person and not through a computer which we all know, is easily to hide behind.

4th grader:

I want to go back to school because this is my last year at Monticello. I also want to go back to school to see my friends in person instead of on the computer. I miss being around other kids. I also learn better in a classroom. I have many distractions at home with siblings and internet issues. Please let me go back to school. Thank you.

Jill Finton/Teacher and Parent:

My personal children and most of my students are suffering in distance learning. It is hurting them academically, mentally, and socially. We cannot keep doing this to them. I think we should reopen 100% ASAP!

Anonymous:

I would like to start off by thanking the hard working, innovative teachers and staff who have done a phenomenal job with distance learning thus far. As a parent and teacher, I have been extremely impressed with their continuous efforts of engaging and teaching their students through these incredibly challenging circumstances. But, although I am grateful, this has certainly gone way past the point it should have and our district needs to start putting our children's educational and mental health needs at the same level of importance as their physical health.

We are at the point of this pandemic that it is clear, thanks to numerous studies, pediatrician's research, and data from schools world-wide that children are NOT susceptible to COVID-19 like we all believed in the beginning. Rather the opposite, children not only rarely contract this virus but furthermore their rate of transmission is minimal. We are NOT keeping our children safe by keeping them home, we are hurting them! And it is time we open up our schools.

Parents have spoken, and survey after survey have shown many families want their children back in school. Please allow those students to return and those who do not want their child to return may continue their child's distance learning education.

Thank you.

Anonymous:

Please agree on an answer for applying for the wavier and if it's approved will we use it? Or with a heavy heart I will have to remove my kids from this school. Not because I don't love having them from home but for my kid's mental health and education.

Thank you!

Patti Cannon:

Dear Board Members,

San Joaquin County has returned to the purple tier due to the dramatic increase of positive Covid 19 cases. Our entire state has seen the same exponential increase daily.

I would like to ask that you allow the Jefferson Teachers to remain in the distance learning/ teaching model until our county returns to the red tier. I think it is the safest thing for every person who is a part of our district, including the children and their families, the teachers, the classified staff, administration and all of our families as well.

Thank you for your consideration.

Patti Cannon

Christopher Fleckner:

I was very dismayed by some of the public comments at the last board meeting. As such, I wanted to express my gratitude to my daughter's teacher, school, district and school board for rising to the challenges of this wholly unprecedented and difficult time.

I am thankful for:

- My daughter's teacher, for going above and beyond to maximize this distance learning experience.
- Her school, for providing a multitude of events for those missing the social aspects of a traditional school year.
- Her district and school board for taking a pragmatic and empathetic approach to the education of our students.

We know that distance learning is not a full substitute for regular in-person instruction, and we all want to see our students return to their classes the way they were before.

However, I feel many parents do not understand that even when schools reopen it won't be the way it was before. Until a vaccine is widely available there will be no recess playgrounds, no assemblies, no cafeteria, no hands-on student collaboration, nothing that resembles the way schools used to be.

The difficulty of deciding when and how schools fully reopen is astounding, and I thank the board for following what guidance there is for the safe reopening of schools. While this year has been difficult for everyone, it is temporary, and I for one am grateful to have my student in such an excellent district during this time.

Julie Bogetti:

We should reopen. Two days ago even Dr. Fauci said schools should reopen (ABC's "This Week Show"). Our students are suffering, not learning, and most are not completing their distance learning work. It's been almost a year.... too long. We are doing a huge disservice to these kids.

Amber Foster:

As a mother of 4 children all home distant learning, this is wearing on them physically, emotionally and educationally. We need to get our kids back to school!

Paul Fern:

Jefferson Board members, COVID-19 cases are rising in San Joaquin County. According to the San Joaquin County Public Health Department, 1,116 new cases have been confirmed in the last week. Dr. Fauci and other health care experts expect numbers to continue to rise due to Thanksgiving gatherings. This is NOT the time to reopen our schools. Please do not gamble with the lives of our students and staff. Consider reopening after the holidays and flu season. The end of Covid is in sight, let's be patient and keep everyone safe during this volatile time. It's the prudent thing to do.

Sophia Posten:

Re open school to children who are ready

5th Grade student:

Hello,

I am in 5th grade and I would like my voice to be heard in regards of returning back to school. I think it is unhealthy for us young children to stare at a computer screen for so many hours with just a short break. I also think it is not healthy because we stare at a computer screen for so many hours per day. I miss being in the classroom with my friends, and I miss interacting with people. I feel that this is very important. It is hard being that we don't see anyone, or talk with one another. I really hope this letter is being seen, and my voice is heard. I really would like to go back to school.

From,

5th grade student

Jeanine Cruz:

We are in the middle of a pandemic, and we need to make decisions based off of that and the science that goes with that. As a public school teacher for the last 23 years, I know this is not ideal for anyone, but we are making it work. I've worked harder than I've ever worked. I've sacrificed time with my family to keep them safe. I invite you to come and see what we do on a regular basis to make this situation work for our students. We are all doing the best we can right now in these unprecedented times. Please join us for a day, or a session. Come watch what we do on a regular basis. Watch as we learn and grow together with our students and their families. We are making progress and students are successful. I need the board to put our family's health and safety first, and do not send us back to school in a hybrid or full instructional model until it is safe to do so. Safe means when we are not in the purple tier, and COVID cases are not spiking. We must wait. It's what is the safest for all involved.

Kelly Shook/Teacher:

I want to take the time to thank you for listening to staff, students and families in order to make the best possible decision. I am a teacher that has had "at risk" students in my classroom for the last 2 weeks' school has been in session. I love seeing the students beaming faces in the classroom, but it is hard to maintain fluid teaching when the "at risk" students in the classroom NEED any and all of my attention. Attention they are seeking by calling out, getting out of their seat or refusing to do work

independently. Teaching 5 year olds to put their pencil onto their paper is much different than a 6th grader watching his or her teacher on the computer. We need to remember in these special circumstances that one size does not fit all. If the decision is to return, primary grades need to have a morning/afternoon or Asynchronous schedule. Teachers need to be able to focus their attention on ALL of the students in the classroom or ALL of the students online.

Ava Crivello:

Hi! I'm in the 6th grade. First I'd like to thank you all for voting to go back to school in January. During covid I have learned to wear a mask, wash my hands more, and stay away from people that are sick. I want to go back to school if it's twice a week or all week. I just want to go back to school to see my friends and actually meet my teachers. I just really don't want to miss out on all the fun things that we will do in the future. We already missed science camp and other fun activities. Our teachers have done an amazing job teaching us and making it fun. But, if we are at school then the teacher would be there to see what we did wrong. Also if we are on zoom it is hard for some kids because their internet isn't always the best. At school we would all be able to learn so much more. Please take this into consideration.

Sincerely,

6th grader from Jefferson school

Concerned Parent:

I am a parent of 3 students in JSD schools and teacher in another district. I understand how it feels to be a parent/teacher to your own children and teacher to my students. Sometimes at the same time. It is crazy and we have survived, so far. We are in a time like no other. I am not sure if there is an answer or correct way to open back up. As a parent I feel confident that JSD can open up safely for students. As a teacher, I totally understand the uncertainty, fear and anguish the JSD teachers are feeling. I am too feeling the same way. The reason why my own children attend JSD schools and not where I teach, is because JSD does it right. I am confident that when the schools open back up in January it will be in a thoughtful manner. As a teacher I am not sure which way of learning any district should open to in person learning in. Getting to my point, the JSD schools need to open up to in person learning in January. Either in full, hybrid or some combination of both. The students need to be back in school. The academic, social, mental, and emotional loss that these students have endured is at time incomprehensible. It will take years for the students to get back to where they left off. Not to mention the students that will never recover from this loss. Distant Learning in my opinion was result of a shutdown. It should not be continued unless we are forced into another shutdown. Again, I will ask that you open the JSD schools back up for in person learning. Please put the students first.

Zachary Gama/6th grade student at Hawkins:

Please I would like everyone to go back to school because there are too many distractions at our homes. I have been able to go back to school for two days and it was great. Thank you for letting me go back to school. If anybody is having inconvenience of distractions at home I think they should say, so we all know how many people are having trouble.

3rd grade student:

Hello,

Please let me go back to school. I really miss it, and my friends. I want to go back to school so I can get more help from my teacher. She does a good job, but it is hard sitting for so long on the computer.

Sincerely,

3rd grade student

1st grade student:

Hello,

I really want to go back to school. Staring at a computer is so hard for me. I really miss all my friends. It is really hard to do math. It is really hard for me to stay focused. I hope we get to go back soon.

From,
1st grade student

Jolene Golarte:

At the last meeting the board agreed that if the county was red or orange we go back full schedule January 4th and if we were in Purple we would use the waiver for K-6 still back 1/4/21. The parent survey was giving 4 different options and now no mention of the waiver to get our kids back January 4th. This is ridiculous at this point. If something is said and agreed to at a board meeting it should be stuck to. AGAIN, Gavin Newsom's kids are back in school as so many thousands in our area. Where is the school stories on the news? The mass ICU patients from kids being back in school with their teachers?? Exactly, there are none. Jefferson needs to make this right just like so many local schools have chosen to do. Put the kids first and get them back where they belong. Mountain house, Manteca Unified, all local private and charter schools didn't have one problem staffing their classrooms with teachers who want to teach their students. What is the problem here?? The problem is there is too many options being put out there. Either go back to school or let those parents home school their kids and teachers can fill a different teaching position. Enough is enough.

I would also like to share a small message my son who is in 6th grade wrote - -

When I logged on one day I was really confused on why there was kids in class. I was also mad when I heard that some just haven't been doing this distance learning and they get to go back before me. Me and other kids don't get to go back and we have been doing the best we can even though we hate it. I don't like distance learning and I'm not learning like I do in school. This makes me really angry since I love school and moved to this nice neighborhood and can't go to school. I feel like summer break is happening right now and I haven't made any friends and don't know what people like and what the school is about. I now have to wear glasses from being on the computer so much. This isn't fair. All kids should be able to go back.

5th grade student:

I would like to return to school. I miss my friends and teachers. I want the proper education. It's frustrating when my computer or the internet is not working. I have had to repeat assignments multiple times because of the problems that happen. I really want to be on campus.

Grit Walther/5th grade Traina teacher:

Please keep us in distant learning. Students and teachers have the right to put safety before test scores. How can students learn if we have to go back and forth between being quarantined and in-class instructions if we open to direct instruction? Many schools go back-and-forth. Right now, we have parents/ families with COVID-19, so students will not be able to join. There will be many more. In addition, teachers will not be able to teach if they need to stay at home due to exposure. Can we limit exposure? No, simply not. Students will walk in groups to and from school. Then we social distance them when they walk in the hallways, just to squeeze them all into one windowless room with less than 1 ft. distance. Students who don't want to wear a mask will be "educated and asked to wear a mask", meaning they can expose all of us until they feel like wearing a mask. Students will go into other groups during school hours, mixing cohorts. And, a cohort of 100 or more students is simply not stopping the spread. I am concerned that teachers become super-spreaders. Please, keep students safely at home. Only because the district brought back students quick enough during a lower infection time, does not mean we are safe! If we would open up (and please don't even consider hybrid), parents who see the danger for their child would have to join JVA, which is a complete different program and could cause many students to fail. Please listen to the over 80% of teachers, who love and miss their students, keep the school closed, stay 100% in distant learning, even if this is for a whole school year. What is more important, a healthy child or a test score?

Please make a safe decision.

Thank you.

Grit Walther

Davin Sardi:

I am a 5th grade student at Jefferson. I am new to the district and really want to go back to school so that I can make more friends. I feel like I learn more in a classroom than behind a computer at home. Please vote for us to go back.

Stephen Day:

One's education depends on intrinsic motivation. If a student is so motivated they will learn under any circumstance; as is demonstrated by the overwhelming number of students who are learning at a reasonable, and expected, rate through distance learning. Students who are not intrinsically motivated, may be able to complete school tasks, but are not learning how to think for themselves and are simply performing. Last spring, when we initially adopted a remote learning teaching dynamic, I had just as many kids who began to flourish, as I did who we want to call "at risk" today. They found themselves suddenly supported by parents who were also at home, some enjoying academic success for the very first time as a result of the one on one that our circumstance has forced upon them; and one we cannot replicate in any of the "return to school" models we are currently considering. It seems fool hearted to make a decision to return to school after only considering those deemed "at risk", regardless of how one interprets the phrase. Now with the county's return to "widespread" status, the expectation of a spike in new cases as a result of the holidays (and with our winter holidays to follow very soon after), and a pending "stay at home" order from the governor's office, we have a chance to avoid repeating mistakes of other communities and districts, and continue to provide the stable structure for learning that our kids need. With all due respect to our trustees and their ultimate decision, I would like to suggest tabling the decision to return until after the holidays, and after San Joaquin County has returned to "red status" with a continuous trend downward. Offering our community false hope is a disservice to all and undermines the fragile structure and stability that we currently depend on. Anything less, in my opinion, would equate to academically harming just as many students as it would benefit, simply for the sake of appeasement and appearance.

D.G.:

If we return to school I would be so thankful! I would get to see my teacher and not work all day on my computer. Plus I wouldn't get frustrated when I got kicked off because of internet. Or frustrated when I have to use the computer to do a worksheet instead of talking with my class.

3rd grader Monticello

Larry Griffith:

I understand that the district feels that it has a good distance learning program that is working. I would like the board to consider the effects that distance learning and this pandemic is having on the children. I have seen my daughter go from being a great student that takes a lot of pride in her work and strives to maintain good grades. Since distance learning has started, I have seen a steady decline in that pride for her work and her drive to complete her work. Please look out for the kids and let those that want to go back to school, have that opportunity. Assess temperatures upon entering classes and send kids and teachers home if they are sick. I ask you again to stand up for our kids.

Stephanie Huiras/Teacher, Jefferson School:

After only a week and two days of teaching small groups of students in person, I have already witnessed masks being pulled down in the hallways and being worn improperly in the classroom by middle school students. This is easily caught and corrected quickly in small groups. Small groups also allow for all of my students to remain 6 feet apart while in the classroom. Distancing cannot be guaranteed with groups that are any larger. Even with all safety precautions in place, bringing more people together indoors is increasing the risk of transmission and gambling with the health and safety of our staff, students and families. I am concerned about bringing more people onto our campuses

especially after the holidays, where gatherings are more likely to take place. If our county is still in the purple, widespread tier by January, we should remain in distance learning. It was stated before and should be stated again, that if our staff and board meetings are taking place over zoom, our classes should be as well.

Zoe Gama/2nd Grade Student at Hawkins:

I want to go back to school because I get frustrated and distracted at home. I don't know what is happening on my zoom meeting sometimes and then I get behind on my work and that makes me sad every day. I love my teacher and hope she is safe if I get to come back. Thank you.

Anonymous/Parent:

Let me begin by saying I feel the teachers our family has come across are doing a great job with distance learning. That being said, I believe there is no substitute for in person instruction and distance learning does not cut it for our children. Schools have returned to being open across the world with little to no problems. Most of the European Union has opened schools back up and kept them open with or without 2nd waves of the virus.

On Sunday, our country's leading expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci said that the default position of schools should be open for in person instruction. In addition, he said that the spread from children is very small. This has been confirmed by countless studies. There are no studies or data that I am aware of that contradicts this position.

I am asking the board to let experts like Dr. Fauci and parents to decide what is best for our children's health and to focus on decisions that are best for our children's education. Our county's COVID cases are still well within the limits to apply for a waiver. That is what must be done for the best education possible. You are not health experts. California has some of the most restrictive COVID 19 requirements in the country, if they will let us open then they have decided for us that it is safe for our children.

Frank Austin/Parent:

I was shocked to learn of the vote to fully reopen schools and take a hybrid model off the table. At the October meeting, the Superintendent suggested "we look at it in November and then really look at it in December." Why was this decision rushed into at the November meeting? This is not only asinine, but also dangerous. COVID is spiking and cases in schools are rising elsewhere where schools have opened without effective protocols in place. When we look to other countries, which was referenced at the last meeting, or cities where schools have successfully reopened, those communities have rigid measures in place limiting other activities in order to prioritize schools - this has not happened here. In New York City, where elementary schools are reopening in the midst of a surge, it is because there are protocols in place, in addition to mask, social distancing, ventilation and group size requirements, that include WEEKLY covid tests for teachers, and families that return must consent that children can be tested. Can the district confirm that all - not just a few - of these protocols and policies are in place here? And if not - there should be no consideration of reopening. Additionally, what plans are in place for teaching staff who have known underlying health conditions that would place them in high-risk categories? What plans are in place for children who live in households with people who are in high-risk categories? We are in the middle of a global health crisis - a reopening plan must actually be planned, undertaken responsibly, and with the safety of teaching staff, not only children, at the center. I implore you to first ensure all of these protections exist, get past the biggest surge we have seen in California and our community, and then reconsider how and when in-person learning will resume. Thank you.

Diane Silva:

Dear Board Members,

I would like to ask you tonight to thoughtfully consider how you plan to have us reopen. At the last board meeting you made the decision to have us open with full classes for a full day. You explained that you didn't think the hybrid model would be effective. The hybrid model does present its own

challenges but so does returning full classes. I would like to ask you to reconsider that we stay on distance learning if we continue to be in the purple tier come January 4th. It is not going to be safe to have 25+ students in a classroom. I mean if you think about it the state is asking us not to gather for the holidays and yet you have decided that it's ok to put 25+ people in a room. And not 25+ adults that may or may not know how to social distance and wear a mask but 25 students who no matter how much we try won't be able to successfully social distance and wear a mask for 6 hours a day. Our classrooms are not made to space out students no matter what our district thinks.

If you have been following the news (and who doesn't these days) our entire state is nearly back in purple and we are on the verge of a lockdown again unfortunately. We are still worse than when we closed in March. At a previous board meeting Mrs. Wingo you used the statistics to help you decide to stay on distance learning and I hope that you will look at the numbers and science again tonight. I ask you to think about OUR students and staff and not what others in our county or other counties are doing. I'd finally like to ask that you listen to your heart and decide what kind of environment you would like to put our staff and students into. Every workplace uses the phrase "Safety First" and shouldn't schools use it too.

Valerie Robertson/6th grade teacher at Traina:

With the infection rate and deaths from Covid-19 exploding across the country, the idea of returning to 100% in-person in early January is, I feel, premature and could, in fact, cause great harm to our school community. We owe it to the students and parents, as well as the greater Jefferson family, to wait until a vaccine is available and to continue to provide distance learning until then.

Jamie McKeon/A Jefferson School Substitute Teacher & Parent of 2 Students at Hawkins:

Stated word for word from the cdc “ The unique and critical role that schools play makes them a priority for reopening and remaining open, enabling students to receive both academic instruction and enable the provision of other critical services and supports. By strictly implementing mitigation strategies, schools will be able to meet the needs of their students and community, while reducing the risk of COVID-19 spread.” When we completely shut down schools the only risk we are thinking about is getting Covid. We need to look at the adverse impact on students’ social-emotional, behavioral and mental health. Many are suffering and it will only get worse. We need to safely transition back to in person school January 4th. The truth is we do not have a magic number of how many cases per day would be safe for us to re-open! There is no consensus on what it should be and varies from state to state. The data is pointing to most cases contracting COVID-19 at home not at school. With proper safety precautions we can go back to school safely.

Amy Reynolds:

I have 2 children enrolled in Monticello. We are very eager for school to open back up so our kids can get back in the classroom.

Thank you

Lea Austin/Parent:

I recognize that many families are out of options, and that many children, including my own are stressed and not faring well under these circumstances. They want to be back in school, want them to be in school, and no one is hailing distance learning as a model to aspire to. But that does not mean opening now is the right thing to do. The response to covid has been a failure on the part of federal & state governments, creating conditions in which parents have no or few options and no financial relief to stay home while protecting their jobs - but it cannot fall to schools to remedy these broader failures. Data have demonstrated that rates of community spread matter - when community spread is up, cases connected to places where children gather be it child care or school go up. Child care settings in California can offer some insight. Covid cases among those connected to child care have risen 138% since mid-July, and among children in child care, the increase is 200%. Given the conditions in California, the projections of reaching ICU capacity before Christmas, and a lack of a community and district plan to prioritize school with the proper policies and protocols, including testing, schools should absolutely not be returning to in-person learning on January 4th.

What do teaching staff have to say? Have they been surveyed this school year to inform plans? Do we know how many have risk factors for severe illness or death from covid that have been identified by the CDC? I heard discussion at that last meeting about responding to what community members want - teachers and school staff are part of our community! I also heard at the last meeting that teachers do their job and bring kids back to campus. Teachers are doing their job, and doing so under incredibly stressful and challenging conditions - no one would opt for these circumstances. There is no perfect response to this crisis, but opening January 4th is certainly a poor response.

Concerned Parent:

I am hoping that at this board meeting our voices are heard. It is time to let our children go back. I have been speaking to other parents, and it saddens me that they will be pulling their child out if we don't return. I couldn't imagine already going through this chapter in their life, and now uprooted from the community that they have been a part of for so long. I don't understand why we have got to this point? How have we come to the point where what is best for our children is no longer the priority? Our children are failing. My children are not thriving like they would in the classroom. It is not just the academics, but the social connection with students. I could make this comment go on and on, but in the end all I want is for you to understand, and hear a parent's voice yearning for their children to return full time back to school.

Concerned Parent:

I feel it's important for our kids to go back to school. We as educators have a job to keep our kids/students safe. This doesn't mean just physical health. It means mental health too, which is equally important. Many students are struggling right now because they don't have the social aspect of education. Suicide is on the rise and this scares me as a parent. The survival rate of Covid is extremely high. It's a virus that isn't going anywhere so we need to learn how to live with it. Even though the schools have been amazing and my children's teachers are awesome, they still aren't getting the education they would get if they were on campus. They deserve the best education and it's not happening. I fear for the repercussions distant learning will have on my children's ability to stay at grade level. I ask myself, how long will it take for my children to gain the knowledge they have lost in 8 months of school. 8 months! I worry that when they can go back teachers will be pressured to "teach more" and students will be pressured to "learn more" in a time frame that is unrealistic. I understand and respect people who are scared of the virus but hopefully there is an option for those parents and students. I understand and respect some teachers are worried too but teachers are essential and so is education. I know most of you already have your minds made up but please consider reopening our district. I am not afraid and either are my children.

END OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Bridges shared data regarding statewide transmission spread by category with the largest category of COVID spread coming from general community spread. He noted that the current purple tier may get more restricted. The State may change data elements that are being review and looked at as well. Last week, the State required masks for anyone above age 2, JSD campuses are already following this guideline. Late this afternoon, Dr. Bridges was provided information that Governor Newsom is likely to issue a three week stay at home/shelter in place order later this week.

One of the questions asked was if we return to purple would JSD have to apply for a waiver? Both state and local health officials have provided in writing that the District does not have to apply for a waiver. Our district is considered open at this point. If the board wants to open January 4th and the county is in the purple tier, we do not have to apply for a waiver.

Schools may remain open and staff will still be able to come to school in a shelter in place situation as they are considered essential. Currently within the county, schools that are open have continued to stay open and maintained students on campus. Another similar question is that if a district is

considered open at this time, the county is in purple and board decides to back to distance learning, districts may pause their open status.

Dr. Bridges shared information from California Department of Public Health top doctor Dr. Galli. Most transmissions in school are from adult-to-adult. He stressed that the most important thing is that schools/staff remain vigilant, continue to have ongoing training and do not let our guard with protocols down. Dr. Bridges shared trends of the tier designation from late August 2020 through November 24, 2020, as well as a breakdown of case rates for San Joaquin County cities and zip codes.

Dr. Bridges shared the information received from the recent parent survey sent out. The survey asked parents which instructional model they would prefer for their students? The options for parents were; full-time in person instruction, hybrid in-person learning, current distant learning, and Jefferson Virtual Academy (JVA).

Parent Survey responses were shared, 43% prefer to remain in distance learning, 31% prefer full-time in-person instruction, 24% prefer the hybrid model where social distancing is possible, and 2% of parents prefer JVA. Data from the parent survey was further broken down by grade level. Distance learning was consistently the highest model preferred and the next closest learning option was full-time instruction. The only time that the hybrid model outpaced distance learning was at the 8th grade level. Based on this information, 55% of families want to return in-person instruction. Under this model, students would still be on a reduced schedule to ensure social distancing. The remaining 43% of students would attend school through distance learning 5 days each week via Zoom. The bell schedules would match those of the in-person instruction students. Parents would need to commit to this model through March 1, 2021. 2% of JVA students would continue as is.

Mrs. Wingo noted that before she opens for questions, she understands how hard teachers are working. She thanked the staff for all of their hard work. Mrs. Wingo noted that she sees that parents, students, need to be back in school. Mrs. Wingo stressed that the Board needs to do what they think is best for the entire community, and this decision weighs heavily on her. Mrs. Wingo noted she has not made a decision yet but she is erring toward caution.

Mr. Carlson indicated that he likes the proposal with options for families who want to stay home and options for families who want to come to school. Mr. Carlson's biggest concern is teachers with preexisting conditions and how we can accommodate that. The last thing he wants to do is put people who are more vulnerable at risk. Mr. Jackman added that if we look at the two models and understand that we have teachers with higher risk categories, how do we shift them around as we cannot hire more staff to accommodate this. Dr. Bridges indicated that the District is looking at this as a personnel matter, as this refers to personal cases of staff members.

Mr. Wells is looking at this situation not from a personal perspective but rather he is looking at this for the greater good. Mr. Wells recognizes that none of this is ideal but our number one issue is safety. Our mission is to educate students but we shouldn't be doing this at the price of their safety. Mr. Wells noted that we are given mandates and data but no funding to do what we should be doing. Mr. Wells thinks that moving forward and adding students to campus in a purple tier doesn't make sense to him. Mr. Wells concurs that distance learning is not the best way to teach. Yet he indicated that we are all having to make other sacrifices. Mr. Wells would love for us to wait two weeks until we get back.

Dr. Bridges added that the District has a staff testing program. Tests are shipped to the employee's home. For those employees who don't have insurance through work, the District is picking up the expense for the tests.

Mr. Raya indicated that he is trying to recall properly categories with the least amount of spread were schools and homes. The typical spread in schools has tended to be between adults. He asked for

clarification on site screening and the precautions being taken at the school sites. Dr. Bridges noted that all staff are required to self-screen daily and report this back to their site/district. Dr. Bridges noted that across the nation the most successful screening for students is to have parents screen students at home.

Mrs. Wingo noted that she is not comfortable bringing students back when we are in purple. Her feeling is that we should look at it in January. When the Board meets on January 12th, if we are in red and things are in decline, we can open in some capacity as soon as the following week. There is a definite benefit in getting students back but we have to be cautious.

Mr. Jackman noted that the Board can make a different motion. Dr. Bridges commented that if the board wanted to open to everyone while we are in the purple tier, we must allow for more social distancing. We could bring back families who want to come back to school and allow families who want to stay at home to continue to do so. If we bring everyone back in purple, that would mean we would have lots of kids in classroom. Dr. Bridges agrees with Mrs. Wingo, that this would not be the best option.

Mr. Jackman asked what some of the logistic issues are. Dr. Bridges indicated that he has spoken to site administrators and advised them to tell staff that we need to start preparing classrooms at this time. Students are going to return to classes at some point and there is no reason for teachers not to start this process now. The District has purchased hospital grade ventilation systems for every single classroom which will be in each classroom well before the December break. PPE's are already in place, as well as procedures and protocol. The only other thing that we would need to know is what parent surveys/choices will be. We would need this in writing to be sure we are fully prepared.

Mr. Wells asked for clarification of the process or determination as to why cohorts were brought on. Dr. Bridges clarified that the District brought back one small subset of students in the cohort model and then county went to red, at that point the District was not required to follow the cohort model. The students who were brought back were those students who received specialized services, either through a specialized classroom, language supports, foster, or homeless youth. The District brought back students who met one of these categories and were failing in distance learning. Last Monday we brought students back in the above categories whether they were failing or successful, if they wanted to return. Dr. Bridges noted that the best approximation is that we have 210 total students back district wide.

Dr. Bridges indicated that we were not returning to in-person instruction in full or hybrid until January 4th at the earliest. The question tonight is if we are still purple on January 4th, what does the Board want to do?

Mr. Wells motioned to table tonight's action until at least December 15th. Mr. Carlson seconded the motion.

Mrs. Wingo feel that we are going to be having a similar discussion in two weeks, and she is opposed to this motion, she feels this should be looked at in January. Mr. Carlson noted that we can table this motion for two weeks. This gives the Board time to digest the information received tonight. Mr. Wells noted that he prefers to table the decision until January. Mr. Jackman feels that we do have the data. For those who want to return to school we need to provide that option. Mr. Jackman's concern is for the teachers in the district that are at a high risk. Can we support them and make sure that they are comfortable and supported to get kids back in place where they are learning? Mr. Jackman noted that for those who want to go back to school we need to provide that option.

Mr. Raya agrees with Mr. Jackman; he notes that it is very clear we have a split community. If the District provides options for people to bring kids back who want to come back, and let students who wish to remain home may still do so. If the colors continue to go down, we can bring them all back.

Mr. Raya is leaning toward the District opening. Mr. Carlson agrees and noted that Dr. Bridges' model allows parents to do that, but noted that it doesn't hurt us to wait two weeks to make a decision.

The Motion to table this decision until December 15th by Mr. Wells and seconded by Mr. Carlson was rescinded. The Board will reconvene December 15th to discuss this item again. Dr. Bridges asked for clarification whether it was alright to continue with the process to get classrooms ready for students. The Board agreed that at some point kids are returning and that we need to be prepared for students to return.

No action was taken as this item was tabled

ADJOURNMENT – MSA (Jackman/Wells) 8:23 PM

Respectfully submitted,

James W. Bridges
Secretary to the Board