

Good evening. My name is Michelle Ring. Here in Rye, I wear two hats. I am a second grade teacher at Midland school as well as the Chief negotiator for the Rye Teachers Association. Before I begin I'd like to make note that tonight I am not speaking as Ms. Ring, second grader teacher. I am here on behalf of the Rye Teachers Association. I'm sure you can imagine the panic that took place last week after Dr. Byrne's email hit the inboxes of all 350 members of the RTA. The non stop alerts on my phone sounded much like a slot machine, unfortunately the rewards were not as plentiful. As a leader of a group of people who are very close to my heart, I feel it is an important part of my role to collect and report as much information as possible to ease the anxiety of my colleagues.

Teachers have been given a survey with a wide variety of questions pertaining to a full reopening plan. The survey will remain open until tomorrow in order to allow people enough time to attend the meeting Dr. Byrne held with staff at 4:15 this afternoon as well as this evening's meeting. At this time, 200 responses have been submitted, roughly more than half of our membership.

Please know, above all else, there is nothing the teachers in Rye want more than to have our students back in school learning with us in person. We recognize that we are in the heart of a pandemic and we have been changing and tweaking everything that we once knew as normal on an almost weekly, if not daily, basis, in an effort to provide our students with the quality of education that is expected in Rye.

Rye's schools have been open since September, following a hybrid and innovative schedule that has allowed us to provide for the safety, academic, and social needs of our students during these unique and trying times. We believe that the governor was directing his reopening comments to those schools that have been closed or totally remote since September. **We are concerned that the reopening plan being presented tonight is being rushed.** We all want to feel safe and have a voice when it comes to a full reopening plan.

Here are some of the overwhelming results of the survey as of now:

- 50% of the teachers who took the survey are not yet vaccinated.
- Of that percentage 37% still are unable to attain an appointment.
- 55% of teachers have had to quarantine from work and 85% of them were due to exposure at school.
- 80% of teachers feel the most important safety measures currently in place are face masks and 6ft social distancing.
- 72% find it concerning to reduce social distancing to 3 feet, even with desk shields.
- 52% of teachers feel good about the health and safety plan in place but think it could be better.
- Only 25% feel excellent about the current plan.
- 43% of the teachers are 100% uncomfortable about reopening while 11% are 100% comfortable.
- The greatest concerns regarding reopening that teachers have are changing the 6ft social distancing that is in place, having adequate time to work on the changes needed for scheduling, as well as where and how students will eat lunch. It is also crucial to understand that moving to a full day will not improve social interactions for the children.
- Scheduling, particularly for the special education department takes weeks to create in a normal school year. There has to be consideration for CSE support, AIS, and ELL including annual reviews and CST meetings. This will be yet another shift for our providers as well as students who would benefit from continuity in their specialized programs.
- Having all students in person means crowded halls, shared spaces, special classes.
- Increased live-streaming because of quarantine and increased travel.

As you can sense we are concerned about many things including the upsurge of new cases of COVID-19 and the appearance of new variants for which the efficacy of the vaccine has not yet been verified. Although teachers have been cleared to get the vaccine, at the present time only about one third of us have been able to do so.

An increase in the number of students in our schools, with a decrease in social distance to three feet, will limit the movement of students within our classrooms. This

will be particularly difficult for our elementary students. And an increase in the number of students in our schools can potentially lead to an increase in exposure and required quarantine.

While change is always challenging, we request that more time be given to developing this plan. There are still too many questions that need to be answered and things to be figured out. Please allow enough time to build this plan so that we all feel safe and comfortable. We are being 100% transparent with our concerns.

Please consider the concerns from those of us who are on the front lines every day while the country is being told to double mask and maintain 6ft distancing. We are scared, have our own families to protect and have been directly impacted by this deadly virus just like everyone else. We are willing to work together to develop a plan that will maintain the safety, academic and social needs of all of us.

Thank you for your time and consideration. On behalf of the RTA we wish you safety and good health.