

## Public Comments

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**From:** Melanie Abdelnour <melabdelnour@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 11, 2020 8:31 AM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** Reopening

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear NBPS school committee,

Please allow me to share my concerns with in-person learning and/or a fall hybrid. I am living with a chronic lung disease (cystic fibrosis) and am considered "high risk" for catching COVID-19.

My son is entering 4th grade at Pulaski this year and, watching the pitfalls of other states' school reopenings, I have serious concerns about sending him back.

If you do move forward with an in-person or hybrid plan for September, I am strongly considering homeschooling my son until I feel comfortable with in-person learning.

Could you please address school re-entry for parents who choose short-term homeschooling in your reopening plans?

Thank you for your time,  
Melanie Abdelnour

## Superintendent's Office

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**From:** Christine-Ann McIntyre  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 11, 2020 2:49 PM  
**To:** Superintendent's Office  
**Subject:** My opinion on re-opening

On Friday 7/31 at 6:30 p.m. (a rare occasion to be out to run an errand) my husband and I happened to drive by Normandin Middle School. I was stunned at the number of students engaged in what appeared to be an organized sport practice session, with adults present, NOT social distancing and NOT wearing masks. Regardless of whether this was a NBPS sports gathering or not, I am sure that most of those young students on the field were New Bedford Residents who will soon be allowed into the school building. It is of grave concern that if they are NOT following social distance guidelines and NOT wearing masks when practicing their sport, they will be very difficult to manage once allowed in the buildings. In addition when they remove their masks to eat in their classrooms they as a group will all be breathing the same air and spreading whatever germs they may be carrying to those around them and to the teacher in the room as well.

Major league baseball teams are cancelling practice and games now due to an outbreak of Covid after the chance they took to return under strict guidelines. These are adults who are hungry to return to their jobs of playing professional sports and know full well the seriousness of their actions and the spread of Covid could NOT be avoided once they gathered as a team. Keep that in mind and realize with open eyes that once our students return to school we will likely have a similar scenario.

Look what has happened in Georgia after the schools have reopened. Headlines 1 day ago read, "260 employees in Georgia's largest school district test positive for COVID-19 or are exposed."

USA Today 8/3/2020, The 597 Georgia residents who attended the camp were required to show that they had tested negative for the virus at least 12 days before they arrived. Staff had to wear masks, but campers did not.

Most staffers arrived for orientation on June 17, and campers and senior staff members joined on June 21. Two days later, a staff member developed chills, left and then tested positive for the coronavirus. Officials began sending campers home the next day, the camp was closed by June 27, and 344 campers and staff were tested for COVID-19.

**The outbreak suggests that children "might play an important role in transmission," according to the report.**

The concept that children are missing out tremendously on socialization is NOT a good argument if risking the lives of teachers and children is the flip side of that concept.

**I am a high risk individual with numerous comorbidity's. I want to work, I need to work, but I do NOT want to risk catching this illness which could prevent me from ever working again.**

Please, let's use common sense and although remote learning has its drawbacks, it also has its place in this situation. I know how often I work with grammar school age children from PK to Grade 5 who are sporting a runny nose and don't even know how to properly wipe their noses. I know how often I have become ill due to exposure to someone's unprotected sneeze. PK, Kindergarten, and Grade 1 students without masks is a recipe for a problem. As a Speech and Language Pathologist working on a child's speech puts the Speech Path. at a higher risk in general, unmasked children some who have already had the virus, or have been exposed to it from other family members is no joke. We don't know enough about how long a person carries the virus and can spread it to others. **Are children who are not required to wear masks or that can't tolerate a mask required to have a Covid Test before returning to school?**

It is also of concern the number of staff members that are NOT particularly concerned because they don't think if they get Covid it would be really rough for them because they are young. We know now that that argument does not hold much weight. These are the same young teachers I will be working closely with.

I live across from Buttonwood Park. I have watched every day during the past 4 months as people and children pass and are NOT wearing masks and are NOT social distancing. Several of them are teachers from our school system. We MUST lead by example. I also know of numerous social gatherings and the like of school personnel and families that have socially gathered and have NOT worn masks. I really do NOT want to be in the same building with them. We are NOT fooling the virus! IT will prevail until we are all on board with a plan to be SAFE.

There is a need for ionized air purification systems in our buildings. What is being done to address that in all buildings? Each year I return to see the overhead vents with the same dirty particles of dust hanging out of them. I hardly trust this is being addressed as I have worked in buildings that have pretty messed up heating systems and some rooms that are being used as offices or therapy areas have NO ventilation.

Children entering the school buildings with the condition that parents will monitor their temperatures does not sit well. Last school year I routinely escorted students to the nurse with fever and illness first thing in the morning, these children were ill when they left home and walked to school or got on school buses. I do Not think trusting they will enter the buildings fever free is logical or a smart way of thinking. If the schools are going to accept the responsibility of bringing the children in then they should have the responsibility of making sure those children are fever free before entering the building. Time consuming? Yes. Necessary? Absolutely.

It was just today that I received a notification from the New Bedford Credit Union reporting a positive Covid case with one of their employees. They have asked that anyone who visited the Credit Union either in person by appointment or through the drive-up in the last 2 weeks take every precaution and even listed testing sites to visit if one feels they were exposed. This is of concern due to the fact that many of our New Bedford Public School employees frequent the Credit Union. Many families of our students do their banking there as well.

All we have been hearing about is that 6 foot distance is a key factor with masks and hand hygiene. This is the proposed distance for restaurants, super market lines, etc. I do not agree with the 3 foot guidelines proposed by the schools. It is the path of least resistance by the schools because 6 feet of distance will be more difficult to achieve. This is unacceptable.

Something worth noting, I just listened to Gov. Charlie Baker on WBZ-4 in a news conference and he stated that he has not been around more than 10 family members and friends since March in close quarters and it tugs at his heart strings not be around other people, yet, putting hundreds of students and teachers back together in schools amid the stress and strain of Covid 19 makes sense?

Although, not ideal, **REMOTE LEARNING has its place**. I feel with every ounce of my being this is the time to use it. If we can abide by the safety aspect of this for the next few months and the virus subsides and schools are properly set up , **NOT RUSHED**, into reopening. Then perhaps, 2021 will ring in a new safer and better planned school re-opening for **all** students and staff.

Sincerely, Christine-Ann McIntyre

## Superintendent's Office

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**From:** Natasha <natashalandry89@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 12, 2020 5:24 AM  
**To:** Superintendent's Office  
**Subject:** Attn: Superintendent Thomas Anderson

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To whom it may concern and anyone who will listen.

I reach out to you today and ask sincerely to reconsider the priority of school at this time.

My name is Natasha Giusti. I have three children. A 4 year old and two 12 year olds. We live in New Bedford, Ma. I am aware that these times are extremely difficult. I understand all of the decisions everyone has had to make come with a great deal of thought and attempt to provide the well being of everyone. I can imagine that input from everyone, especially parents, is overwhelming. I am not a major influencer or a well known person in my community. I don't have expert training. I do have a voice though. As small as my voice is you would have my sincere gratitude if you would take the time to hear me out. I am well aware that my words hold no value and will not persuade any changes one way or another. As a parent and a very stressed out citizen this is my attempt to get through the cracks in hopes that someone will listen. All we can do in life is try right?

The process of reopening schools is taxing on every single individual. Having to make these decisions is not easy. Every parent, teacher, principal, superintendent is impacted so greatly I would imagine the pressure is unimaginably high. It seems as though no one is content with any plans to reopen, hybrid or fully remote. Families and teachers have different lives and there is simply no one size fits all plan. Education is crucial for our children. I am not disputing that. Safety, health and mental health are also crucial and necessary for all.

My reasoning behind this attempt to reach out is to ask whether or not anyone has suggested or considered the possibility of postponing school for the entire school year. I can understand hearing such an idea probably is shocking and seems ridiculous. Covid-19 is ridiculous. This virus isn't just going to vanish. We don't know for sure when a vaccine will be fully available and safely done so.

Every school district is working incredibly hard to create plans with an impossibly short amount of time. Teachers already have to train for mental health, allergic reactions, shootings, etc. Just those areas right there make it harder and harder for teachers. No one could have seen this virus coming. Having 10 or even 50 days of training to provide effective care in schools in order to keep everyone safe is an uncomfortably low amount of time.

My proposal, as outrageous as it sounds, is to take this entire year to take a step back and properly plan and train with out rushing. Getting input from stressed and angry parents, teachers and more certainly puts a lot of pressure on people in the positions of making these decisions. I think we can all agree we all want this to be over with. We all want our lives back. We also know that isn't going to happen.

The desire to reopen everything has been understandably high. I believe it is safe to say some things have been rushed. People are not always being safe.

Taking the time and patience to remodel schools or arrange them in the right way to prevent the spread of the virus should be top priority. This is going to take more a realistic amount of time. Giving the teachers a better chance to train and schools an opportunity at perfecting their plans to the best of their ability whether the plan is to reopen fully, hybrid

or remote is imperative. Parents and families also need more time and recourses to prepare. Parents have to work. There are not enough recourses for families to remote learn productively and without major difficulty. Everyone needs more training. Rushing into reopening schools in any way is not the way to do it. The more we push forward when we're not ready to the more we get pushed back.

Taking the year would allow the pace to slow down, reduce the stress load and panic caused by rushing and forcing everyone into a new unrealistic normal.

This is so hard on every adult as it is. Imagine the toll it's taking and will continue to take on our kids.

Why does everything have to be rushed? Why are children expected to have all their core education completed by the age of 18 then pushed into college right out of high school? Lacking the social and emotional piece that is a major part of attending school is already significantly missed. All of us run on fumes the majority of the time always trying to get to the finish line as fast as possible. Right now we need to value and fight for everyone's lives! Preserving life is necessary for our future and necessary for human life period. Prioritizing the steps to continue a way of life should be done with caution.

Schools can wait. Everyone can just wait. There's no vaccine. There is no cure. There are so many many things we do not understand and are not equipped to handle. School should not be on the top of the list to focus on right now. With out our children we have no future. Protecting their lives should be at the top of the list. Even agreeing with the fact that education is a vital necessity, high levels of stress impact the ability to learn and make progress. I am greatly concerned focusing on school, school, school is potentially setting everyone up for failure.

Raising my own children, I have seen and believe, kids are definitely more resilient. However, our kids are seeing our stress. Our kids are forced to use their homes as their school. It is a known fact that children hold everything in for the duration of the school day and release all of those bottled emotions when they get home. Doesn't this make school from home a conflict? At least to families not having any experience with homeschooling?

I understand many people have opted to take online classes in college and even high school. That is an effective way of learning for those people. It is not effective for everyone. Even with special education services being provided in person, focusing on school and providing a proper education for the children needs to be done with the utmost care. Would taking the year to properly address all areas pertaining to Covid-19 have a drastically negative outcome for children and families?

There was no way we all could have foreseen such a tragic virus that would wipe out our entire ways of life. We will never have the normal we once knew. With that said, any version of a new normal will not look the same of every single household.

Is it completely absurd to consider a break for the children for the year? Is it absurd to suggest a productive break to Provide adequate time to train teachers for more than 10 days? Teach parents how to manage remote learning better. Come up with a better childcare plan for working parents and understand that a 7am-3pm school day from home is nearly impossible for some parents. Provide financial aide to the parents having to teach and monitor kids teaching when it's impacting their work.

The bottom line is there will not be a one size fits all solution to anything pertaining to Covid-19. None of this is simple or easy. We have to do what we can with what we have. What we can do is be patience and take one step at a time. We all have to work together. We all have to do our best and practice kindness, empathy and compassion. Being able to create effective strategies with out risking the safety of everyone takes time and patience. To plan out guidelines and structure for everything impacted by Covid-19, most importantly schools, can not be done through panic and lack of time.

Please consider what I am suggesting. I have never been one to speak out to public figures or even have a thought to ask for anything. I have always believed it wasn't my place. Times have changed. Everyone's voice matters. If we have

learned anything in life, before COVID-19 to the present, is that we all want more time. We could use delaying school as an opportunity to actually take the time we need. We must think of our future and the impact we will bestow upon our children. This is my cry for help. This is me desperately trying to do my part in protecting my children and every other child and family. The well being of everyone's health and sanity depends on safety and a calm sense of mind.

Thank you kindly for your time.

Sincerely,

Natasha Giusti,  
just your average mom with a tiny voice hoping someone will hear my plea and consider maybe taking a step back isn't such a bad idea.

Be safe and be well.

Natasha Giusti

## Public Comments

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**From:** Debra Surprenant  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 12, 2020 11:39 AM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** Fall 2020

Hello, I have a few questions that I hope the committee will address or the district presents a bona fide plan to address...

1. Are schools without ventilation that are often 90+ degrees with windows open safe? (Winslow, Ashley, Swift...the buildings that are over 100 years old!!!
2. Will staff and students be tested prior to in building face to face instruction and how often afterwards?
3. What are the protocols for a positive Covid test for staff and students?

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

## Public Comments

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**From:** Cynthia Roy <cindyanneroy@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 12, 2020 12:00 PM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** Public Comment for Today

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Reopening Schools Letter for Public Comment

August 12, 2020  
Public Testimony  
RE: Reopening Schools

Greetings,

In the same way that the state is taking a deliberate and careful approach to reopening the economy, the state must take an equally deliberate and careful approach to reopening our public schools. The reality is that coronavirus is not under control, our school buildings are not equipped to meet environmental health and safety standards due to years of underfunding and disinvestment, and districts do not have adequate plans for reopening schools. Under these conditions it is only reasonable to begin the school year with remote learning. Students and educators must return to buildings only when it is safe.

Unfortunately, what we have witnessed in New Bedford is a lack of leadership. Everyone with a formal position of authority and the ability to make decisions pertaining to the reopening plan appears to be passing the buck. Meaning, our leadership is attributing to another person or group one's own responsibility and sitting comfortably in the sidelines instead of taking responsibility, stepping up, and engaging in the fight for a safe reopening. Leadership is too comfortable waiting for direction from the state and blaming the state for inadequate guidance. Because of a lack of leadership, New Bedford does not have a solid, thoughtful reopening plan when compared to many other districts in Massachusetts. How do we know this? Because many questions from educators and the community have gone unanswered! New Bedford deserves more than vague political statements made for the press. New Bedford deserves a plan that was developed with the community and leadership that advocates for the community.

According to the CDC, hybrid schooling is not low risk. However, our teachers did not need the CDC to tell them this. Educators -- who know the school environment more intimately than anyone else in a school -- are terrified to go back to the school buildings at this time and terrified of the deprofessionalization of teaching. They fear being in poorly ventilated spaces with students who will fail to properly wear masks. They fear layoffs and the purchasing of ed tech as substitutes for real teachers. Educators across the nation, Massachusetts, and New Bedford are demanding a reopening plan that takes their concerns and expertise into account. They have demanded a remote start with a phased in return when safe. They have demanded thoughtful professional development that will ensure robust remote instruction. They have demanded to be treated as professionals with respect and autonomy -- autonomy to develop their own curriculum as opposed to following scripted curriculum crafted by third party vendors and autonomy to decide whether or not it is safer and smarter to teach from their home or from the school buildings.

Leadership should be advocating for a remote start as well as additional school funding. The real commitment to a safe re-opening of the school system lies in budgeting. Additional funding is necessary to guarantee the minimum conditions for a safe and eventual face-to-face reopening. Personal protective equipment, touch free infrared forehead thermometers, hand-sanitizers, and COVID-19 testing kits must be widely available at schools. Additional staff is needed



to reduce class size and better meet the needs of students. There must be nurses in every school, adjustment counselors, psychologists, social workers, school family liaisons, and other wrap around support. A teacher to student ratio of a maximum 1:10 is appropriate for physical distancing. Technology must be provided to students and educators as well as IT support. Funds for food must be provided to families while students are away from school buildings.

Funding should not be used on high-stakes testing and test preparation. This means that we need to make a concerted effort towards the elimination of the pressures and financial commitment associated with high-stakes tests and test preparation in our classrooms and operational procedures.

We are particularly concerned with special education students who are disproportionately impacted given the likelihood of having pre-existing health conditions and also have specialized educational needs. If schools are reopened and students must attend in face to face format, special education students will be at higher risk given pre-existing health conditions. On the other hand, if schools are to offer a virtual format, special education students will also be impacted given their specialized educational needs and the limitations of online learning. For these students, plans should be carefully coordinated with parents. In order to minimize impact, prevent discriminatory measures, parents must be full partners in the decision making. Every effort should be made to retain and engage all support staff in servicing the needs of these students as this task will be monumental for the school district.

Business as usual cannot continue. Lives are on the line. We need to slow our educational system down. Healthy bodies and minds must take precedence over fear of academic learning loss.

While giving thoughtful consideration to the intense levels of risk currently being faced, school buildings must not reopen to the public at this time. Additional funding must be secured and a thoughtful phased-in-approach based on community input and public-health benchmarks developed before reopening. Anything less would be irresponsible and unconscionable. State and district leadership should be held accountable for the projected lives lost to the premature reopening of our school buildings.

Name: Cynthia Roy

Address: 63 Calumet St. New Bedford, MA 02744

Sent from my iPhone

## Public Comments

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**From:** Shandy Monte <shandymonte@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 12, 2020 12:32 PM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** Public Comment for Today

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Name: Shandy Raposa

Address: 38 Pierce st, New Bedford, MA 02740

Sent from my iPhone

## Public Comments

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**From:** Erik Andrade <erikpandrade@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 12, 2020 1:21 PM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** Public Comment

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear New Bedford community member and NB School Committee,

I cannot understand how the same New Bedford School district that canceled an outdoor graduation for 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the student population is still thinking about returning to school in September. I cannot understand how a school committee that has held all of their meetings virtual via Zoom can be pondering sending thousands of students, teachers, paraprofessionals, janitors, and administrators back into schools. It does not make any sense.

I have found it deeply troubling that Jon Mitchell and the School Committee have had meetings without public access, have changed the school committee meeting times hours before a scheduled meeting, have shut down public comment, and have even changed the meeting days. This behavior is deeply troubling and has made it significantly challenging for the New Bedford citizens to engage in democracy.

Moreover, I do not believe that \$250,000 of the New Bedford Public School Budget and \$250,000 of the city budget should be spent on Police stationed in our schools. I believe that \$500,000 could be better spent on other pressing priorities. I do not believe that police belong in our public schools. Especially considering the fact that the New Bedford police department has at least five members of its force that participated in the cover up and murder of a 15-year-old child, Malcolm Gracia.

The New Bedford Police Department also actively has a High Energy Patrol Directive 06-71 that directs officers to target youth from historic African, Indigenous, and low-income communities. The directive labels children as young as middle school aged as "thugs". Directive 06-71 further states that NBPD's "response to these thugs must be immediate, certain, and most of all effective in removing them from our city." The language and tone of the directive and the goal of the directive is problematic as encourages a climate of racial profiling and the criminalization of children.

As such I demand that the New Bedford School department end the SRO program and that the district and city use the \$500,000 saved to better provide education, a fully funded restorative justice program, personal protective equipment, and wrap around services. Moreover, I demand the school district follow MTA guidelines for re-open.

In hopes of Justice,

Erik Andrade  
212 Grinnell Street