

The Board of Education acknowledges the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and we want to take this opportunity to express our sincere condolences to anyone and everyone in our community who has been impacted by this terrible illness.

The impact of the pandemic has been felt in many ways - as a health crisis, an economic crisis and quite honestly, we will wait to see the impact to our students.

We understand and appreciate the importance of all of the health and safety measures taken to slow the spread of the virus, including school closings. However, we must also acknowledge that closing schools in particular has resulted in many unintended adverse consequences. These consequences could be emotional, psychological, social and academic.

As we look forward to September, the Board of Education is concerned by comments from several officials suggesting that schools should remain closed in order to prevent a potential second wave of the virus. Furthermore, we are concerned by commentary that suggests a future educational system in which remote virtual learning is emphasized in lieu of school buildings and traditional classrooms.

We commend our administration and staff for their efforts and successes transitioning – on an emergency basis – to a remote virtual learning environment, and we acknowledge the exciting possibilities and realities of technology, and its potential to augment and enhance the delivery of education and educational experiences for our students. However, we reject any notion that virtual learning will ever be an adequate substitute for in-person learning and instruction in a traditional classroom setting.

While we must and will prepare for all possibilities for the Fall, the Board of Education would like to inform our community of our strong desire for a safe reopening of our schools in September. We believe the classroom and school settings provide the best opportunities for academic achievement, as well as for social and emotional growth.

Much has rightly been said about the damage caused by the health crisis, and the resulting economic crisis. We believe it is our responsibility to prioritize safely reopening our schools in September. Our children have a right to their education. Closing our schools must be viewed as an extreme option of last resort in the direst of emergencies – never as a first resort of preventative measures. Schools must be considered essential.

The Board of Education remains committed to a safe reopening of our schools in September and will continue to advocate for that result.

Thank you.