

Mrs. Meyer and Chair Musella,

The EG Parents for In-Person Learning would like to extend our sincere appreciation for your service to our students and community. We acknowledge the unprecedented situation the administration and School Committee have been challenged to address this school year and thank you, our teachers, and staff for all the effort being put forth at the expense of personal health risk. Clearly, you have tried to make lemonade out of lemons.

We believe it is very important that you hear this affirmation as we are aware that our mission, to advocate for EGSD students to experience a superb and enriching educational experience that facilitates academic success in alignment with social and emotional well-being despite challenges facing the district and community, may at times require us to challenge the quality, outcomes, and practices of the current education product provided by the EGSD. Such challenges are not meant to be adversarial but rather communicate feedback and information that allows the community, administration and teachers to have a shared appreciation for why it is critically important to urgently collaborate and address the unintended but very real instructional quality decline and the mental health safety crisis for many of our students.

In the spirit of this collaboration and within the bounds of the appropriate operating procedures, we are requesting an opportunity to have a constructive conversation with a small group (3 individuals) of the EG Parents for In-Person Learning guiding coalition and yourselves. Our intention would be to engage in an exchange of ideas and questions for the purpose of helping each group, the School Committee and EGPFIL, better understand the desire for and challenges facing innovative thinking to address the new crisis our students face. We understand that this discussion would be informational only as all decisions or commitments must follow established procedure and presentation to the SC and public. Our goal is to accelerate your understanding of the parents concerns and support your effort of how to address them in a means faster than can be accomplished in a series of 3-minute statements every two weeks. Let us offer an example of an apparent disconnect that a conversational approach can hopefully resolve and create greater productivity and gain community support.

In last night's meeting, it was perceived that the SC believes that the answers to the EGPFIL petition have been available for review all along. To many listening, some comments from SC members seemed condescending and dismissive of the request for objective metrics. Mrs. Meyer's report and the committee's response focused on the exact opposite of the request of the petition. What was highlighted were the metrics being used to keep our students OUT of school through hybrid and distance learning. Further, it was suggested that we should be grateful for all the hard work despite evidence of hundreds of districts around the country being able to accomplish much more in the provision of in-person learning for MS/HS while we continue practices that are now 7 months old. Additionally, we have come to learn that many of those districts are doing so with similar, or even higher, Covid positivity metrics than our Kent County. Continuing that narrative and strategy may become incendiary and result in escalating organized activity to have the EGSD education product and student focus called into question. We want to avoid that!

The discussion parents expect and want to hear is one of hope and innovation with their children's education and mental health in mind! For example, will MS/HS return to 5 day in-person education after COVID cases drop below X/100K in EG? How many weeks of that testing level before action? What are the actions the district is prepared to take at other defined metrics? Are teachers mobilized to immediately make changes when the metric is obtained? Can we change our facility usage practices to return sooner? What daily changes should students be prepared for as the determining metric/s approach? Parents and students want to know there is a strategy to courageously LEAD but all communications from the committee suggest we only plan to FOLLOW or react and frankly parents don't even know who or what you are following. They are weary of evasive answers and moving goal posts. This is very frustrating for a community that has prided itself in being one of the high quality, student-focused and leading education providers in the state. The consequence is that the administration and SC appear to have abdicated its authority and leadership to politically motivated influences rather than being innovative, courageous, and student-focused.

There are several other areas to discuss to understand education quality, facility challenges, and innovative approaches. We believe a conversation covering concerns and supporting your understanding of the community ask could significantly increase the effectiveness of future SC agenda discussion on this topic while expediting the benefit to EGSD students as soon as possible. We appreciate there are many facets and stakeholders to this discussion. For that reason, we must align the influencing groups and decision makers as quickly as possible for the benefit of all students. Ideally, we would appreciate prioritization in your schedule to conduct this requested discussion before the March 16th SC meeting so that learning for all parties can be leveraged in a more constructive public discussion.

Please advise your timing availability and preferred methodology (virtual or in person) to have a positive, student beneficial discussion.

With Respect and Appreciation,
East Greenwich Parents for In-Person Learning