

BOE Meeting 2/9/21

From Katie Courtney Goncalves

Good morning. Like many other parents in the District, I am reaching out for an update, not a blanket response, (1) on plans the Vestal Central School District has for moving to Phase 4, full, in-person instruction. Are you awaiting new guidelines from NY State or the local Department of Health? Are there conversations taking place on how to accomplish this or updates from these conversations with the reopening committees? Will you be able to provide an update at the February 9 BOE meeting? I haven't lost faith that the Administration and BOE has the best interest of students in mind, but the lack of any proactive, District wide communication is concerning. My two school-aged children (a seventh and fifth grader) have been doing well with the hybrid instruction but also wonder when they will be able to return to school five days a week. (2) Are there plans to start the 2021/2022 school year off in hybrid mode? We are grateful to all of their wonderful teachers who are going above and beyond to make this school year as productive and positive as possible.

In reading the minutes from the recent BOE meeting, I was sad to learn of Dr. Lamash's retirement but do hope she is enjoying it. (3) What are the plans to bring a new Assistant Superintendent of Instruction on board?

This message was also sent to emails for the Vestal BOE, ReOpenVestal and designated school principals for my children the end of last week but I haven't heard back from anyone yet.

Thank you for your attention to these inquiries.

Courtney Goncalves, Parent

(1) At the February 9th Board meeting, Superintendent Ahearn reviewed current health directives (social distancing by 6 feet and wearing masks) that restrict the increase of students in the classroom at this time. We continue to follow guidance from the CDC, local and state health departments to ensure the safety of staff and students.

In the meantime, there are on-going discussions within the District with teachers, principals, support staff, etc on ways to get more students back in the classrooms, contingent on the acceptable guidelines.

(2) With the increase in vaccine availability and continued vigilance with social distancing and safety procedures, the District is hopeful that a return to more in person instruction will begin Fall 2021.

(3) The position of Assistant Superintendent for Instruction has been posted and the application process has begun.

NOTE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT:

The District has been carefully reviewing health and safety guidelines throughout the COVID pandemic. Updated CDC guidelines were released February 12, 2021. The CDC did not change the six-foot social distancing measurement for schools. As you know, the social distance measurement of six feet creates a limitation for the number of students the District can bring back in-person. However, across the State, there have been requests to lessen the social distance measurement in classrooms due to lower "positive" counts amongst students and with staff receiving the vaccine. Many school districts are seating masked students in classrooms closer than six feet with the use of desk barriers. As a response to this shift, the District has been conducting meetings on how we might move towards four days a week of in-person instruction. Various options are being considered. There are a number of hurdles to overcome but we have administrators, teachers and support staff involved in finding a way. The District will compile and send out a survey to gather information from families to further the planning.

From Dave Drew

Please read at the Board of Education Meeting in the **Voice of the Public** section.

Dear Board of Education,

We can clearly see that the community is concerned that Vestal has no plans in place to get kids back to school full time. They want you to offer a full time in-person option. **In just 3 days time, over 500 people signed a petition demanding Vestal return an in person option to those who want it.**

This has been an eye opening exercise. One of the main takeaways was ho many teachers were amongst the signers. Not able to sign a petition so strongly worded toward their own district, many who could not sign shared their stories and feedback privately. This is no surprise. Vestal teachers are the best and the need you to help them get their kids back in classrooms.

Between Friday February 5th and Sunday February 8th, 500 people took the time to sign a petition. Here are their demands:

- 1. For those who want to, return all Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) students to full in person instruction, immediately.**
- 2. For those who want to, return all five local elementary schools to full time, in person learning by the beginning of the third trimester.**
- 3. For those who want to, return all 6-12th grade students to in person learning by the 4th marking period.**

These are tough times and while we're frustrated, we implore you to think creatively, take action and give the teachers, parents and students a way back to their classrooms.

Thank you,
Dave Drew

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From Jennifer Gilmore

To Whom it May Concern,

With the expectation of our questions being addressed tonight at the virtual board meeting, not just read and filed away, we have questions.

1. Simply; what plan is in motion to accommodate the children going back to school 5 days a week, should their families choose that plan? We have a child that is in extreme need of the appropriate teaching and additional intervention services he is not receiving due to the current hybrid plan.

If there is not a plan, why not and when will it be implemented?

2. Is it a district rule that the children are not allowed to “touch” a ball or books that have been touched by others? It has been brought to my attention that if children are playing soccer and 1 kid touches the ball with his hands the ball is taken away and they are not allowed to play anymore. This is an unreasonable response to trying to avoid contraction of Covid-19. Has anyone ever thought of the idea of everyone just washing their hands before they move on to the next class???

Our children are being robbed of their childhood and taught that an unreasonable response makes sense.

It is my understanding that these questions/concerns will be addressed during the live stream tonight, we will be watching with the expectation that this will be happening.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Gilmore and Travis Gilmore

(1)a. At the February 9th Board meeting, Superintendent Ahearn reviewed current health directives (social distancing by 6 feet and wearing masks) that restrict the increase of students in the classroom at this time. We continue to follow guidance from local and state agencies to ensure the safety of staff and students. A timeline for implementing Phase 4 (full in person instruction) has not yet been established. In the meantime, there are on-going discussions within the District with teachers, principals, support staff, etc on ways to get more students back in the classrooms, contingent on the acceptable guidelines.

(1)b. We continue to follow guidance from CDC, local and state health departments to ensure the safety of staff and students. The increase in vaccine availability and continued vigilance with social distancing and safety procedures is very encouraging.

(2) From the District’s website; Pathway to Recovery document, page 25:

“Shared Objects: The sharing of objects, such as lockers, cubbies, laptops, notebooks, touchscreens, writing utensils, chalk and dry erase boards, musical instruments, tools, and toys, will be limited, as well as the touching of shared surfaces such as conference tables and desks. Students, faculty, and staff must perform hand hygiene before and after contact. Individual student belongings will be kept separated. Shared supplies will be limited to one group of students and cleaned between use by cohorts of students. All high contact areas, shared areas, and shared objects must be cleaned between use.”

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distance measurement in classrooms due to lower “positive” counts amongst students and with staff receiving the vaccine. Many school districts are seating masked students in classrooms closer than six feet with the use of desk barriers. As a response to this shift, the District has been conducting meetings on how we might move towards four days a week of in-person instruction. Various options are being considered. There are a number of hurdles to overcome but we have administrators, teachers and support staff involved in finding a way. The District will compile and send out a survey to gather information from families to further the planning.

From Caryn Hannagan

Dear Dr. Ahern,

I am writing to you to voice my concern about the push to send students back more days. Although I value schools, as a local teacher myself, I also know that we need to consider the health and safety of the school staff and students before we push them all back together again. I feel that the slow opening approach has allowed families to make thoughtful choices for their families. I feel that until all of the teachers and staff has had the opportunity to be vaccinated if they choose to, we should not put more students in the school. When our local numbers are still high and community spread is still happening we need to stay diligent. Please do not cave to the loud voices of those that are pushing for more days to alleviate their need for outside daycare. Teachers are not day care providers.

Thank you,
Caryn and Mike Herceg

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From April St. John

Hello,

I am writing with a few questions that I am hoping can be addressed at tomorrow evening's board meeting. I have two children attending vestal schools with a third child slated to begin kindergarten in the Fall of 2021.

(1) I'd like to know what plans are underway now to introduce Kindergarteners to the school buildings, teachers, staff and the bus systems? What can we expect for Fall 2021? Will our children be in attendance 5 days a week in person?

(2) Has or will Vestal begin to look at surveillance testing for COVID-19 any time soon?

April St. John

(1) Kindergarten registration has begun with information packets mailed last week. The elementary building principals are planning the orientation session for kindergarten students, with current safety protocols in mind. A building principal will contact you to discuss this year's plans.

(2) In the event the District is placed in a Yellow Zone, we will be required to test 10% of staff and 10% of students weekly. To that end, District staff have collaborated with staff from Endwell Family Physicians to establish testing protocols and procedures. We held a trial run of our testing procedures on Saturday February 6, 2021 at the high school.

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From Debbie Merrel-Lee

Dear Vestal School Board, Voice of the Public;

Our daughter is in 11th grade at Vestal High School. She started out as hybrid, but we quickly moved her to full remote. She has been on full remote since the second week of school. She is doing very well academically. While we know that she has missed all of the football games, dances, and prom that 11th grade usually brings, we are very happy with the caution and care that you have taken as a district to keep our children safe. We know that you, the Vestal School Board and Administration, are being pressured by some parents to have the Vestal School District go back to attending school 5 days per week during this global pandemic. We believe that this would be a mistake at this time. If you do decide to increase in-person days again before the pandemic is over, please let families also have the choice to stay on full remote.

Again, thank you for not giving in to pressure, up to this point, to increase in-person days, when the COVID 19 virus is not under control.

Sincerely,
Debbie and John Lee

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From Bridget Metzler

Dear Administration and Board Members,

Please address and communicate (1) **a plan for the remainder of the school year regarding in school versus remote learning days.** I am hearing people say that this is not even being discussed, and that is preposterous. I understand you have space constraints, but you've now had 11 months to get creative with existing or new space.

(2) Please also communicate a draft plan for next fall to parents by May 2021. I understand it may change, but if Vestal can't figure out to accommodate all kids back in school by then, we will be moving, and I need time to make plans for that move. We have been very patient and supportive of the district, but Fall 2021 will be 1.5 years into the pandemic. If you can't come up with a space plan to have all the kids back in school 5 days a week, we will not be staying here.

Thank you,
Bridget Metzler
- African Road parent

(1) At the February 9th Board meeting, Superintendent Ahearn reviewed current health directives (social distancing by 6 feet and wearing masks) that restrict the increase of students in the classroom at this time. We continue to follow guidance from CDC, local and state health departments to ensure the safety of staff and students. A timeline for implementing Phase 4 (full in person instruction) has not yet be established due to current CDC guidelines limiting available space (ie, 6 foot, social distancing)

(2) With the increase in vaccine availability and continued vigilance with social distancing and safety procedures, the District is hopeful that a return to more in person instruction will begin Fall 2021.

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From Susan Christensen

Dear BOE,

(1) Why do district school buildings continue to be closed to our children on Wednesdays? Reopening the schools to children on Wednesday would increase school building capacity 20% without the need to increase staff. Wednesday has turned into a day off for high school students, and elementary teachers are interacting with all students in a normal fashion on Wednesday. (2) When is this policy going to be reevaluated? What about going to an every other day schedule instead of 2 cohorts a week?

We need to give our children the option in person learning and Vestal needs to be more flexible with the options for consideration.

Best regards,

Mark & Susan Christensen

(1) Wednesdays were established for remote instruction and teacher activities; along with time for custodial/maintenance staff to deep clean. A survey of the building principals shows what activities staff are engaged in on Wednesdays, which include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ staff, grade level, department meetings; along with RTI (Response to Intervention), Special Education, Building Planning Team, AIS (Academic Intervention Service), building staff meetings
- ✓ Professional development trainings offered to staff
- ✓ Preparing remote instructional materials for pick up
- ✓ Lesson planning, office hours
- ✓ Zoom instruction for special area teachers, remote learners, Special Education services

(2) A timeline for implementing Phase 4 (full in person instruction) has not yet be established due to current CDC guidelines limiting available space (ie, 6 foot, social distancing)

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From Tammy

To whom it may concern;

There is word out that tremendous pressure is being put on the administration to resume a 5 day a week in person schedule. As a parent of a 9th grader who has chosen to do full remote and has not had the

easiest time, I say please wait. Wait until more people have been vaccinated. Wait until we know more about the variant strains that are emerging. Wait until it is safer to do so. Safer for the teachers and staff. Safer for the students. I think Vestal has been doing a great job so far, and despite the precautions there are still reported cases each week. Imagine possibly multiplying that with larger populations in the buildings at one time?

I realize your job is incredibly hard right now, and I want to thank you for doing all you can to keep everyone safe.

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From Hilary Ciaravino

Hello my name is Hilary Ciaravino. I am a parent of a 6th grader and a 10th grader. I’m also a teacher in another school district in the area. I would like to express my support for the current plan you have in place for our students. My children are enjoying the two days a week in person, while I still feel comfortable having them there with smaller class sizes and distancing.

The district I work in is looking towards a four day a week full attendance model. As a middle school teacher, I will have up to 28 students in my class. I am not comfortable with that scenario as a teacher because I feel that my students won’t be able to safely separate and distance with the use of just small partitions.

Many point to the lack of spread within our schools as a reason to increase days but these statistics are probably most likely due to the small class sizes and vigorous masking and distancing. This could change with 25+ students together in the middle or high school classroom.

As a teacher I truly understand the struggles our students are going through with remote learning. But we are not out of the woods when it comes to the numbers of cases in our county and we shouldn’t be moving towards more days until we see a longer period of cases declining and more vaccinations being done.

I know it’s been a rough year all around but understand that there’s many of us out here that know that the district must follow certain protocols in order to increase attendance days. This could be a slow process and I’d rather it be done right than pushed through due to pressure.

Thank you all for your hard work! My kids are having the best year they possibly could under the circumstances and it’s due to the positive attitudes and hard work of their teachers.

Thank you,
Hilary Ciaravino

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From Amber Montalbano

Mr. Ahearn, Mr. Kasson, and board of education members,

(1)What are Vestal's plans to further open its schools for the remainder of the school year, for moving to the next phase of reopening?

(2)Do you have plans to move to the next phase for the 3rd trimester for elementary schools, or the 4th quarter for the middle and high schools?

(3)Can you please communicate with Vestal parents what steps would need to be taken to move to the next phase, or what is holding you back from moving to the next phase?

I believe that much of the frustration that Vestal parents are feeling comes from the lack of communication we are receiving from the district. Please communicate your needs with parents and also ask for our feedback.

Parents are not generally aware of current state and county guidelines in terms of re-opening. It would be helpful to hear from you about what is currently required. (4)Are students still required to remain 6 feet apart? What barriers remain, preventing our students from returning to class full time?

(5)How will you address the recent petition that has had over 500 signatures, as of this morning, asking Vestal to further open their schools? Will you respond to the petition tomorrow night at the board of education meeting?

Thank you for your time,
Amber Montalbano - parent of 3 Vestal students

(1-3) At the February 9th Board meeting, Superintendent Ahearn reviewed current health directives (social distancing by 6 feet and wearing masks) that restrict the increase of students in the classroom at this time. We continue to follow guidance from CDC, local and state health departments to ensure the safety of staff and students. A timeline for implementing Phase 4 (full in person instruction) has not yet be established. The increase in vaccine availability and continued vigilance with social distancing and safety procedures is very encouraging.

(4) According to health departments, students and staff are required to social distance and wear a mask

(5) the Board was made aware of the petition at the meeting February 9, 2021

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From Emily Pape

Hello,

I am a parent of three children who attend school at African Road Elementary School (Kindergarten and 2nd Grade). I would like to share my support with the district on the current state of operations at ARE and Vestal Schools generally. My children are currently attending ARE as hybrid students.

I believe our school and the district has done a good job thus far at managing the variety of competing needs – to ensure the best education for our children possible given the circumstances, the health and safety needs of students and families, the health and safety needs of teachers and school staff, and the myriad of new and changing regulations from NYS. While Broome County has experienced an increase in COVID rates in the community, the cases within the school district and at ARE in particular have remained low. I continue to feel that my children’s and family’s health is not put at undue risk by attending school in person. I also appreciate that we have been able to settle into a relatively stable routine and have largely been spared of the back and forth between full remote and hybrid models of instruction. As a working parent with a demanding job, this has made my life much easier to manage. I am aware that families in other local districts have experienced this type of instability.

It is worth noting that while I believe that the district has done a good job thus far at maintaining quality education and health and safety within the district, there is room for improvement on some fronts. Many families continue to struggle during this time due to the extra strain that remote learning has put on them due to the specific educational needs of their children, the demands from their jobs, and/or economic hardship brought on by the pandemic over and above economic hardship that already existed. In general I believe that the communication between the district and families can be improved – more bi-directional communication lines, more/better support resources for parents who are managing their children’s education at home, and potentially better teacher-parent communication.

I am aware of a parent-led petition to support further reopening and expansion of in-person instruction. I am not supportive of this petition, largely because the petition does not prioritize health and safety of students and school staff. I would be happy further support the district as it responds to the petition.

Sincerely,
Emily Pape

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From Kelli Smith

Dear Mr. Ahearn & Vestal Board of Education:

We write as concerned parents of three within the Vestal Central School District regarding the renewed pressure of some in the District pushing for all grades to be in-person 5 days/week. Please know that people like us who are satisfied with the current phase status for the sake of our children, teachers/staff, and community are naturally not as quick to fire up. We write from the view of parents of three from 6th-12th grade, and we fully acknowledge that those with much younger children, or with IEPs, and those from high need families may have a different view.

While we applaud their civic engagement, the recent Change.org petition that appears to have a decent amount of signatures should be viewed critically. It is important to note more than one parent/immediate family member could sign, people without children in the district could sign, and people without children at all and that live well outside the District and the state of New York could sign. For example, among the handful of the publicly viewable comments:

“I’m not from Vestal but I personally know 2 families...”

“I have family in the school district. That need my support.”

“Even Though I’m from Michigan i understand the need for education.” (sic)

Without a well-designed survey by the District that asks *only* District family preferences, as well as that of our teachers, and whether people would feel uncomfortable moving to more in person instruction, such a petition is not a valid means to express public sentiment in the District to be considered in setting school policy. Many families appreciate Vestal’s cautious approach over time, following the state guidelines, and feel comfortable with some in-person instruction but not more than Phase 3 (if even that) with new viral variants, not all teachers/staff yet vaccinated, and more research that indicates there are long-term health effects even in youth (even those that were asymptomatic). The group demanding 5 days/week repeatedly disregard this group within the District and make repeated statements that we should just go fully remote if uncomfortable.

We encourage the district to be more cautious about claiming there is no spread within the schools. It is difficult to understand how this can be said definitively when absolutely no surveillance testing is happening, and many are aware that we do not have the local staff needed for robust contact tracing. As students moved back this week at Binghamton University, there are 7-8 asymptomatic cases a day among the arriving students. Without this type of robust surveillance testing – which it is important to note has cost millions and meant diversion of other student supports - no one can claim with any level of confidence that there has not been spread in the Vestal Central School District, especially since we

know youth are often asymptomatic with COVID-19. It is important for all to understand that often the calls to re-open schools are in response to the many districts across the country that have not had any in person instruction at all since last year, and re-opening is expected to be in conjunction with surveillance testing. We question the continued higher number of cases being detected in the schools but what seems to be significantly fewer people being quarantined, and thus whether true contact tracing is happening.

We do respectfully request District leadership share how many families started in-person and have since decided they did not feel comfortable with either how things were handled in the beginning for various reasons or went remote once the District moved to Phase 3 without giving families the choice to continue with 1 day/week for VMS or VHS, for example. We hope there is accurate record keeping of who is hybrid and who is remote. We know of more than one family at the high school and middle school who started hybrid last fall and switched to remote, but even though they have requested to be remote, the District continues to classify them as hybrid (despite the families specifically requesting to be designated as remote). Our understanding is that at the start of the 3rd marking period the District removed (or at least the high school) removed all the flags in the attendance system that said “temporarily remote” even though a significant number of students that were hybrid were actually remote. Teachers can accurately record who is present remotely or in person, but none of it is flagged, and only comes up if contact tracing becomes necessary. This therefore does not account for the students that do not feel comfortable and are experiencing a high level of anxiety around attending more than the prior one day per week they initially signed up for last fall. It also causes one to wonder if there is a reason for all of this and welcome an explanation.

Along those lines, the recent demand that hybrid students attend all their scheduled days – families were not given the choice to keep their student one day/week. We have 3 children and two are relatively okay going one day/week but are anxious about going two days/week. We were not asked if they wanted to attend more than one day per week so we wrote in the school survey they would likely continue with just one day per week. We appreciate the recent acknowledgement that students moving from fully remote to in person may be experiencing anxiety, but we hope it is also acknowledged that there are also students that are highly anxious about attending more than one day in person, especially with what are now very crowded hallways in the high school.

Some recent research and articles on long-term effects of COVID-19, including a medical research study on student athletes showing that even those asymptomatic but positive can have lasting health impacts, follow for your consideration, though we realize you may already be quite familiar with such information. Our hope is that health concerns and state guidance will continue to be considered in your decision-making. It would be regrettable if you were pressured by parents that have much less regard for basic health of all students and teachers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kelli K. Smith, Ph.D. Chadwin B. Smith,
Ph.D.

2/23/21 NOTE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT:

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are seating masked students in classrooms closer than six feet with the use of desk barriers. As a response to this shift, the District has been conducting meetings on how we might move towards four days a week of in-person instruction. Various options are being considered. There are a number of hurdles to overcome but we have administrators, teachers and support staff involved in finding a way. The District will compile and send out a survey to gather information from families to further the planning.

From Nathan Tumey

(1) I am writing as a concerned Vestal parent about what efforts the school is taking to increase instructional days? I understand that the limitation at this point is physical space. You need desks to be 6 feet apart. (2) I would like to know who is making this regulation (at a state level or county level). I realize that your hands are tied here - but as a parent I need to know who I can pressure to change things. Is it the county board of health? Or the state? If you wanted to move desks back to their original configurations (but keep masks), what governing body would push back on you? Thank you for all you have done to keep our kids in school as much as possible. But I want to remind you that the current situation, while an improvement from where we were, is still TERRIBLE for kids. Please let me know what I can do as a private citizen in this community to help get our kids back in school. I'm willing to write letters, make phone calls, contact a lawyer - whatever it takes. Our kids are suffering terribly. They need to be back in school full time.

L. Nathan Tumey, Ph.D.

(1) At the February 9th Board meeting, Superintendent Ahearn reviewed current health directives (social distancing by 6 feet and wearing masks) that restrict the increase of students in the classroom at this time. We continue to follow guidance from CDC, local and state health departments to ensure the safety of staff and students. A timeline for implementing Phase 4 (full in person instruction) has not yet be established.

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From Lucia Esposito

Hello,

I am parent of two children enrolled in the VCSD. One is a 4th grader and the other one is a 1st grader at ARE. Our 1st grader has an IEP and would greatly benefit from more in person instruction to help her learn.

I would like to know (1) what VCSD's plans are for re-opening our schools either this school year or next year considering the new reports from CDC about in school transmission as well as other local school districts re-opening to more in person days. I am very concerned about lack of communication about plans and what has and has not been considered to move us to the next phase. Our children have been impacted by the lack of social interaction and limited in person education. While many typical children are able to keep up there are many children with or without disabilities who are falling further behind and are experiencing worsening mental health issues. (2) With other local districts providing more in person instructions how is VCSD making sure our kids are not falling behind academically?

(3) If there are specific guidelines that you are following that limit number of kids in class rooms please provide links to those for our review. I would like to see the specific directive that limits number of kids because of the 6 feet AND "masks on" rule that has been mentioned by VCSD.

It is my understanding from speaking with parents in other districts including the local catholic schools that they are able to accommodate up to 15 children in their classrooms. (4) I would like to know what directive VCSD is following that limits many of our classrooms to less than 6 kids hence limiting the number of in person days.

I would also suggest that its time for another parent survey to learn more about the current preferences and interest in moving into the next phase.

I would appreciate a phone call back from someone in the administration: 607-349-824

Thank you.

Lucia Esposito

(1) At the February 9th Board meeting, Superintendent Ahearn reviewed current health directives (social distancing by 6 feet and wearing masks) that restrict the increase of students in the classroom at this time. We continue to follow guidance from CDC, local and state health departments to ensure the safety of staff and students. A timeline for implementing Phase 4 (full in person instruction) has not yet be established due to current CDC guidelines limiting available space (6 feet, social distancing). In the meantime, there are on-going discussions within the District with teachers, principals, support staff, etc on ways to get more students back in the classrooms, contingent on the acceptable guidelines.

With the increase in vaccine availability and continued vigilance with social distancing and safety procedures, the District is hopeful that a return to more in person instruction will begin Fall 2021.

(2) A survey of local school districts indicated that the small districts with lower enrollments could accommodate additional in person instruction with their existing space. The survey also

showed that Vestal is on par with other higher enrollment districts with the days of in-person instruction

(3) (4) social distancing in a classroom would in effect put a 12 foot circle around each individual in the classroom, including instructional and supports staff. The physical size of classrooms limits the number of occupants.

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From Sherry Hammaker

Please can someone tell me why? (1) Why is administration approving sports and yet not going back to school 5 days a week. This is insanity. You are prioritizing sports over the kids education which is already on shaky ground and thats being gracious. Our kids are floundering. My high schooler says that school is a joke. She says Teachers don't do anything on Wednesday and not very much on Fridays. My special needs first grader needs the structure of school every day! We plan on him repeating first grade at the rate he is going.

Parents are not getting answers. I have included others as we dont hear back from the superintendent or the district clerk. I have sent emails and I get nothing.

There has been a rumor that there is no plan to back more than 2 days a week the rest of the school year. (2) Can someone please address this when clearly Broome County has cleared these sports meeting? The CDC is saying it's time to get back to school. Its been stated by many sources that it is not usually spread through school. Many other schools around us are 5 days a week in person and have been from the start.

Parents want answers. We are taking action if school doesn't open soon.

Thank you
Sherry Hammaker

(1) NY State/Governor Cuomo approved school districts to begin moderate and high-risk sports beginning February 1st with approval from local health departments. For more information regarding athletics, the link for NYSPHSAA Return to Interscholastic Athletics, Winter & Fall Season II Edition is <http://nysphsaa.org/Portals/0/COVID%2019/2021%20January%20-%20Return%20To%20Interscholastic%20Athletics.pdf>

(2) At the February 9th Board meeting, Superintendent Ahearn reviewed current health directives (social distancing by 6 feet and wearing masks) that restrict the increase of students in the classroom at this

time. We continue to follow guidance from CDC, local and state health departments to ensure the safety of staff and students. A timeline for implementing Phase 4 (full in person instruction) has not yet been established due to current CDC guidelines limiting available space (6 feet social distancing) In the meantime, there are on-going discussions within the District with teachers, principals, support staff, etc on ways to get more students back in the classrooms, contingent on the acceptable guidelines.

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From Sherry Hammaker

Here is an article stating that the CDC says its safe to open schools. When is Vestal going to open up to 4 or 5 days a week. Many other districts (local) are doing 5 days and have done everything in their power to make this happen. They have invested in partitions. And these children are able to go to school 5 days. Have you considered this?

Parents feel we have not been communicated to with the plan to get us back to more days. (1)When do you plan to do more days for elementary? (2)When will you reconsider the effects on our special needs children? I believe all special ed children should be 5 days a week not just those in 12.1.1 classes. Our children are failing miserably and it is of little consequence to you or so it seems.

I plan to have my son repeat first grade next year as he has floundered since last March. And there will be no one to stop me from sending him back to first grade. This is an outrage.

(1) At the February 9th Board meeting, Superintendent Ahearn reviewed current health directives (social distancing by 6 feet and wearing masks) that restrict the increase of students in the classroom at this time. We continue to follow guidance from CDC, local and state health departments to ensure the safety of staff and students. A timeline for implementing Phase 4 (full in person instruction) has not yet been established due to CDC guidelines limiting available space (6 feet social distancing). The increase in vaccine availability and continued vigilance with social distancing and safety procedures is very encouraging.

(2) Special Education staff and building administrators have made themselves available to all parents and students with special needs.

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