

Subject: FW: SLCS D Plan for 2020-2021

Date: Tuesday, August 4, 2020 at 6:29:07 PM Mountain Daylight Time

On Thu, Jul 30, 2020 at 2:55 AM Katherine Kennedy <Katherine.Kennedy@slcschools.org> wrote:

Dear Parent,

Thank you for taking the time to write to me. I appreciate hearing your point of view, and I have read your email carefully. I am sorry that I cannot reply to you individually as I have done for those who have identified themselves as my own constituents or those who are teachers in our district. I hoped to do so, but I have simply run out of time, even though I have spent several hours each day answering emails for the past three weeks. I have instead written an email addressing some of the issues many of you included in your letters.

I appreciate your passion and your advocacy, but I don't agree with you. I believe that either we do not share the same set of criteria for evaluating how to decide this issue or we do not evaluate those criteria in the same way. I have tried to decide based on science and data around COVID-19 and SARS-CoV-2. I have consulted academic public health sites rather than government sites, because they seem less politicized. I have watched universities make decisions around the country, and I have looked carefully at COVID numbers in our state and specifically in our county. I have thought about the composition of our school district, our networks, and our high schools, and how our school bus systems bring students from the west side to the east bench at East and Highland, and from the west side and the east side to downtown at West. I have investigated this virus, and tried to consider the most up-to-date information about what we do know and, importantly, what we don't know, from layperson medical sites like this: <https://www.ucsf.edu/magazine/covid-body>. I am not deciding based on my child's academic needs or extracurricular interests.

Many of you have asked me not to be "fear-based." I say loudly and clearly that I think it is okay to be afraid of this virus. This virus is scary. Parents, students, and teachers are worried about this virus, and they have written to me about their concerns about what might happen to them if they catch it. Usually, however, they are more worried about what might happen if they catch it and pass it to someone they love. I have heard stories about fear, but I have also heard these stories more in the context of love. People have written to me about their fear of losing people they love, whether it is their ten-week-old newborn baby or their 99-year-old parent. You may be saying fear-based. I am hearing love-based.

Many of you have told me to read the CDC guidelines. I have read them. These are new CDC guidelines because our president did not like the original CDC guidelines. These new guidelines were not drafted by the CDC but by the Health and Human Services Department and were designed to put pressure on communities to open schools because President Trump believes it will help his campaign to do this. I will tell you that I don't want him to win. There could be no worse outcome in November. From the *New York Times*: "Mr. Trump, pummeled with criticism over his handling of the pandemic, sees reopening the nation's schools this fall as crucial to reinvigorating the economy and to his re-election. While many public health experts and pediatricians agree that returning children to classrooms is critically important,

they warn that it has to be done cautiously, with a plan based on scientific evidence. They, along with teachers' unions, have accused the president of putting children and the adults who supervise them at school at risk by politicizing the subject" (C.D.C. Calls on Schools To Reopen, Downplaying Health Risks," 24 July 2020). I will not change my vote to uphold a president who has botched the handling of a global pandemic at every turn.

My own constituents from the Avenues, Capitol Hill, and Federal Heights have asked me to vote for Superintendent Madden's plan at a rate of 23 to 4 (2 hybrid, 2 full time; it could be that I have missed some constituents on either side of the issue because they have not identified themselves as being from my district). Teachers have asked me to vote for Superintendent Madden's plan at a rate of 67 to 3. This does not include SLEA's advocacy for Superintendent Madden's plan, SLASA's advocacy for Superintendent Madden's plan, or the West Teacher and Administrator Network advocacy for Superintendent Madden's plan, where 94% of teachers and 100% of administrators who answered (a total of 291 administrators and teachers).

I believe that Superintendent Madden's plan is the best choice. I think we will realize this quickly. Already, the Davis School District has modified its plan from full time to hybrid. Most areas have lower numbers than Salt Lake City, and they are beginning to act cautiously. I hope we don't learn what happens in other districts if they begin school full time. I would prefer that they realize that we have the right sort of plan and decide to adopt our plan, or if they are already at a true yellow level, lower than 5% positive COVID rate for 2 weeks or more, a hybrid plan.

Tomorrow night, I will vote for Superintendent Madden's plan. I will ask him to draft clear data-based parameters for moving from remote learning to our hybrid plan, and then gradually to full-time school. I will ask teachers to provide quality instruction and reach all children to whom they are accountable. I will ask the SLCS D to provide services for the social and emotional health of our children and to use CARES money to support all students and especially low-income children. I will continue to advocate for mask wearing and safety in our community so we can lower COVID numbers as quickly as possible.

Stay safe.

Sincerely,

Katherine Kennedy

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