

I am a teacher at Pisgah Forest Elementary and I teach music to every student in our school. PLEASE vote to open school with plan C. There are rising numbers in western NC counties, and it's not safe for anyone to mass gather!!

Carolyn Smith

Members of the Board and Dr. McDaris,

Thank you for your service to our community. We understand fully that you have been placed in an impossible situation, and that you'll do what you feel is best for all. With that, I hope that you see that best for all is to not reopen under Plan B and force people with grave concerns to enter daily a confined place where the still unknown Covid illness WILL be lurking no matter the controls set in place.

Please consider:

- 1) Playgrounds are still unsafe to open. Our state leaders say that parents are unable to keep their own children safe in groups of maybe 10 on a playground in open air where the virus doesn't spread as easily. Yet our state leaders are saying that teachers and school personnel are going to be able to keep these same kids safe in mass numbers in an enclosed area with air that continuously circulates.
- 2) The state leaders say that meetings of over certain small number are not safe and must be held virtually, but it is safe to hold meetings of hundreds of kids in person in very confined areas.
- 3) We've already lost many kids in this county, my older son included. Many children have serious health issues included brain tumors and diseases that severely compromise their immune systems and put their lives at risk each and every day. They do not deserve the stress of wondering daily if they or their family members will be exposed at school.
- 4) With all the rules about reopening, the daily tasks to be completed for safety, and simply the fear so many will have about being there, is it really reasonable to think that students can focus with in-person learning and make it effective at this time. YES, we need to return to school when it is safe, but right now is not that time. In-person learning with everything going on is not going to be as effective as it is during a normal time. With a month of planning for virtual learning, school personnel can make this work and have people be able to attend school without worrying every second of the day about exposure.
- 5) No matter the rotation, there WILL be cross-contamination. Teachers and staff will be there daily, so all students will be exposed. There is absolutely no way to prevent this.

I could go on and on with examples, but I am sure you've heard them all. I ask you to consider the fact that at the end of June we had 22 cases. We were spared the early onslaught. Now, at the time of this writing, we have 76 cases, 54 more. We couldn't be in school in March, April, and May when there were no cases because it was too risky. But now that we've seen a 245% increase in 17 days it is suddenly safe? That makes no sense.

It is better to be safe than sorry is applicable in this situation. Maybe Plan C is overreacting and we later learn that opening would have been ok. But people will be alive. With no vaccine, still unclear information on just how this virus operates and how serious it really is, please don't be sorry. Adopt Plan C for the beginning of the year and let us see how this plays out. Don't send people back into confined areas while cases are rising dramatically quickly, and there are still limits on large gatherings in open-air spaces. It is a disaster waiting to happen. All of the largest districts in the state have already decided to begin the year with Plan C, or are considering that switch at their meetings this week. Please join that list. Truly, put students first. We always say

kids are resilient. They WILL bounce back from this when it's over, but they have to be alive to do so.

Please vote for Plan C at this coming meeting, and allow the schools to have a full month to prepare for virtual learning.

Finally, I understand the planning nightmares of any situation. But if there MUST be in-person learning, I propose that TCS adopt Plan C. Let everyone. students and staff that have concerns, operate from home. However, make a volunteer in-person plan. There are teachers who are comfortable returning. There are also parents who are comfortable sending their children or who must send children so they can go to work. Those people can voluntarily go to in-person learning, while the expectation remains that Plan C is what we are operating under.

Thank you for your time in reading this. I hope you will consider these points in your impossible. There is only one chance to do it right, but many chances to do it wrong and regret it.

Best of luck, and God bless.

Dan Courtine  
5th Grade Teacher  
Brevard Elementary  
399 Greenville Hwy  
Brevard, NC 28712

I am scared.

I am scared that if I choose to teach online, my classroom job would not be waiting for me afterwards.

I am scared that I may bring this disease home to my children and to my mother. I am scared that I will get sick, that I could die, and leave my two teenage sons without their single mom.

Schools will get this disease. Sooner rather than later, and then what do we do?

I desperately want to teach in person again, but we are more unsafe now than we were March 13. Every statistic supports that. I don't see any other choice than to start slower and move to Plan C temporarily. There is no reason in the world that makes my life a number to risk. My sons' lives are not worth that risk. Not a single one of my students' lives is worth risking.

Sincerely and always your faithful teacher,

Monica Schultz, M.Ed  
Seventh Grade Teacher, Brevard Middle School  
English/Language Arts

I am a parent of a new Kindergarten student and would like to reach out to express my opinion that schools should be choosing Plan C for the upcoming school year. I do not think it's safe for ALL students or teachers to be back inside the school building yet.

If 1 in 4 teachers would be at risk for contacting Covid-19 that is a risk too great to send teachers back to the school building. I will withdraw my student if anything but Plan C is voted on for the upcoming school year.

Thank you and hope this will be shared with the Board Members before the upcoming School Board meeting this Monday.

Allison Nergart  
(Parent at Pisgah Forest Elementary)

Transylvania County Board of Education:

I am writing as a private citizen concerning the return of Transylvania County students for the 2020-21 academic school year.

As of today, the pandemic in North Carolina and Transylvania County is posting its highest numbers with no end in sight.

There are a number of reasons that students should not physically return to classes. Among the most obvious of these are: 1) It's not realistic to expect students (especially younger students) to successfully observe the necessary safety requirements; 2) School staff and employees will be at great risk due to the exposure to students under these conditions; 3) In addition, students place the community and their families at risk of contracting the virus in a school setting and then spreading it to the community and their families; 4) Operating food service and out of class activities will be difficult if not impossible; and 5) It is not possible to safely operate restrooms.

Until these issues are successfully addressed, the risk posed by returning to school is too great.

We should continue our discussion in the context of the reduced spread of the virus, the development of a vaccine, and mitigating the issues listed above.

Sincerely yours,

Ann S. Stone

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. While I was not born in Brevard, I was raised very similarly, in a small, close-knit mountain town in Pennsylvania. The moment I started coming here it felt like home to me and has officially been my home for over three years now. I'm invested in our community, I care about the people here, and I'm worried about how we are moving forward in the face of this disease.

It is my opinion that we have to protect our most valuable assets, which to me is our people. And while our children are not being impacted by the severity of COVID-19, they are still fully capable of carrying it. We have done our best to protect the elderly in this community thus far, but I believe that reopening schools, even in a limited capacity, would be disastrous.

I was considered essential from the very beginning of the shutdown in March. While I mainly worked from home, I did have to go out from the very beginning. I had an early exposure to someone that tested positive from out of town and while I was "careful" prior, I do everything I can to protect myself now. My point being, I've been out in our county since our case numbers were single digits. The people that weren't wearing masks then, aren't wearing masks now. I've been in some businesses that "require" their paid, adult employees to wear masks and they either can't get them to wear the masks and if they do they are not wearing them properly.\*\* How are we going to get children to wear masks properly, all day? Is the school shutting down for cleaning everytime there is a confirmed case? It is a very large, very unstable circle with so many question marks that I cannot pretend to know the answers to. I only know that I don't know the answers. And I also know that I would rather see people that I have grown to love stay safe than rush into an unknown.

I understand the decision is out of my control, but I felt I had to write this letter and implore you to do what is right for our people, our kids, our teachers, our community, and most importantly our elderly. We have to be there for each other. Thank you again for your time.

\*\* To be clear I have also been in amazing businesses here that are very careful.

With Warm Regards,

Brittany Mellott, Broker

Hello

I am a parent of three Transylvania County Public School System students and was given your email address as a contact for making a public comment regarding school reopening this fall.

I am extremely concerned for the safety and well being of school staff. So I would like to relay my strong support for complete virtual school for our county for at least nine weeks. Hopefully by then our metrics will be acceptable. It seems anything less puts our community at unnecessary risk.

Thanks  
Christopher Reeves



I am writing to express my concern about the reopening of our schools amid the covid pandemic. I have been an employee of TCS for many years, as well as a parent of three TCS students. I love the teaching profession. I love interacting with and learning from my students, interacting with and learning from my colleagues, and I even enjoy the challenges that come daily with teaching middle school students. Being apart from my students makes me concerned for their intellectual and emotional welfare, especially those who are in difficult home environments where their basic needs are often not met. I fully recognize the value of and mourn the loss of face-to-face instruction, knowing how critical it is to the growth of each student. That said, a SAFE return to school is imperative for every student, staff, and community member.

The sacrifice we are being asked to make now, in the midst of the covid pandemic, is beyond an acceptable request for educators. We are being asked to place ourselves, our families, and our community at increased risk in order to provide face to face instruction in the implementation of Plan B. I have an immunocompromised spouse who takes immunosuppressants daily to manage his chronic condition. In other words, his immune system is intentionally being suppressed in order to allow his body to function. This places him at extremely high risk of serious complications, including death, if he were to contract the coronavirus. Face to face instruction would expose four people in his immediate household to a very large group of staff and students each day, in two different schools and three different grade levels. That's a lot of people. That's a lot of risk. Unnecessary risk. The exponential increase in covid cases in our community over the last two weeks (including students, staff members and family members of students) demonstrates that we are not adequately controlling the spread through current guidelines that include social distancing and mask wearing. Yet Plan B would rely largely on these measures to curb the spread within schools.

For the past 6 months, our state and our community has limited large gatherings of people knowing that an increase in numbers also increases risk of spread. Reopening schools, even at reduced numbers, will initiate the largest mass gathering in our community since the pandemic began. This gathering will be conducted indoors for six hours a day, at least four days each week. At my school alone, there will be approximately 300 students and 75 staff within one indoor facility for the duration of the school day. Nowhere else is a gathering of this scope recommended or even allowed in our state. Yet educators are being asked to conduct the experiment to "see" if face to face instruction might work without further spreading the virus. This is beyond the scope of inherent risk that teachers should have within their profession. Our school buildings and our personnel are simply not equipped to be able to combat this virus given the current status of our buildings, our protocols, and our personnel. We are not a healthcare facility and should not be asked to act as though we are. We cannot protect students and staff (along with their families and the greater community) with the systems, supplies, and protocols that would be needed. In addition, the culture of mask-wearing in our own community greatly alarms me and gives me serious reservations about how many students and even staff would fully, 100% comply with the protocols needed. So many in our community (students and staff) are very vocal about not wanting to or needing to wear a mask. This doesn't bear well for creating a mass gathering of school age children and hoping for little to no transmission or, worse, serious illness or death.

I also am concerned about the increased risk to my children. In order to have a blend of face-to-face and remote learning, my own children would not have a parent at home on their remote days. I've been told that the plan is to have teachers' children attend the teacher's school on their remote days and they will be placed in a classroom with supervision by a staff member. This is completely unacceptable. This places my children in a situation where they

are not only exposed to the students with which they attend school on their face to face days, but also will be directly exposed to the student groups at my school. Why should my children face higher risk than other students, simply in the name of “we must get back to school”? Additionally, their time at my school on their remote days reminds me a lot of an ISS classroom where students are given independent assignments to do and have to sit and work on them independently all day long. I cannot imagine how unbearable that would be for them.

As a teacher, I feel as though I am being asked to risk my safety and that of my own family for the sake of supporting our economy and allowing parents to return to work. There are other solutions to providing educational services to our students beyond Plan B. Many school systems in our state are opting for a short-term virtual start to allow for the growth in cases to subside and to better ensure a safe instructional environment for students and staff. Please consider Plan C, complete virtual learning, at least to begin the school year and set a date by which we will reevaluate that plan for action based on the data available at that time. When we initially began virtual learning in the spring, it was a very quick change to which we all adapted, knowing that it was not the ideal situation. Let me be clear, none of this is ideal and it will not be until the pandemic has passed. Until that time, it is our duty as educators and leaders in this community to make decisions based on data and on the safety of our students, our staff, and our community members.

Sincerely,

Jodi Huggins  
6th grade EC Teacher, Brevard Middle School  
Parent of 3 schoolchildren

Hello Transylvania County School Board members,

My name is Erica Courtine and I am a first grade teacher at Brevard Elementary School. My husband, Dan, teaches 5th grade at BES, and our son, Rhys will be in 4th grade.

I wanted to write to you this evening about your decision of how to return to school this fall. I wanted to share my story and my perspective with you as a family of teachers who has a child attending our schools. Over the past few months, I haven't been too stressed about the fall because I was fairly confident and hopeful, that with the rise in covid cases, that we would have all virtual learning this fall. As we draw closer, and there is more talk of choosing plan B, I am getting so nervous.

I have a bit of a different experience than most families. In February 2019, our 9-year-old son, Jameson, died suddenly of an unexpected illness. He was a completely healthy, athletic, active little boy who, little did we know, had a completely undetected and rare birth defect in his intestines. I have lost my first born, perfect little boy. The last year and a half has been pure hell for my family.

When the statistics talk about people dying, and of our concern, children dying, the probability of a child catching covid and dying from it, those numbers aren't just numbers. They are actual children. If we open the schools, even on plan B, if there is any percent chance of a child dying, is it worth it? How many of our students are you willing to have get sick or die? One? Two? If statistically, our odds of a child getting sick and dying in our county is about even one child, that's too many. For each death, that's an empty seat at a kitchen table. It's a pair of shoes at the front door collecting dust. It's a backpack and a lunch box with no owner. It's parents and siblings who have to live with broken hearts. If you'd like to see the effects of "the risk," come to our house. We'll show you a bedroom that isn't being used and brings tears to our eyes just to peek in. No family should ever have to go through what our family has gone through. Trust me, it is not the type of grief or pain you overcome in six months or even 18 months, which we are approaching. It's a lifelong pain.

For us personally, I would be constantly under stress if I had to send my son to school because my husband and I are forced to teach in person. Our son has a type of wheezing and asthma that is triggered by viruses. Any time he gets a little cold, we have to whip out the nebulizer or inhaler. Can you imagine a child like him catching Covid? I am terrified. I love my job so much. Our schools, our principals, and our students are amazing and bring me so much joy to teach. But the idea of teaching in person and possibly exposing my only surviving son has me wondering if I could be sacrificing him for my career. I am filled with guilt and anxiety.

I am 100% in favor of all virtual learning. I know that it is not an easy decision to make, and it will indeed put a strain on working parents, but this is a special time in history. We can't sacrifice health in order to try to get "back to normal." Any parent who has lost a child will tell you: we would have chosen to lose our jobs, be bankrupt, lose our homes, and be homeless over having lost our son. Losing work may be hard on some parents, but I guarantee that dealing with severe illness or death is far worse.

Lastly, please remember that this county has outstanding and talented teachers and staff. Don't underestimate what we can accomplish while virtual teaching. We are a creative and flexible bunch! My husband and I have both been reading, researching, and trying to educate ourselves on the best online teaching techniques. We're learning about bitmoji classrooms, tools like Jamboard, and other great resources. No, virtual teaching won't be like the "old normal," but if

anyone can take virtual teaching and turn it into something effective and enjoyable for students, it's Transylvania County teachers. Our family is already brainstorming how we can set up a teaching "studio" in our home if we need it for virtual teaching. If you choose all virtual learning, our teachers and students will meet the challenge head on, and we'll exceed your expectations.

Tomorrow night, please remember families like mine who are scared of the effects of having school in person. The risk isn't worth it, and we have the tools, talent, and leadership to make virtual learning work. Thank you so much for your time and consideration

Erica Courtine

Members of the Board:

I'm sure you are hearing many thoughts and opinions on school reopening. I appreciate the incredibly difficult position you all are in, along with our school leaders, as you try to navigate this challenging situation. I would like to weigh in with a few thoughts on the topic. I have a rising 2nd grader and a rising 5th grader at BES. We love BES and they are very eager to return, in person. I don't have an opinion on whether the schools should open under plan B or plan C. I understand that many parents and teachers have concerns regarding safety, and I also understand that many parents are in a tough spot and need their kids back in school. Additionally, many students will face significant hardship if schools do not open for some level of in person instruction. I am extremely fortunate in that my schedule is flexible and I am in a position to make what I believe to be the best decision for my kids for this coming school year. I will likely be choosing between a virtual option and homeschooling. While the safety of my children as well as that of the teachers and staff is a great concern, my reasons for leaning towards at home learning have more to do with the school environment than they do safety. I'm concerned that the restrictions and requirements called for by the governor and NCDHHS will not only create an environment that is not conducive to learning, but also make it impossible to adhere to many best educational practices. So really in sharing my thoughts with you, I'm not trying to influence your decision on how to open schools, but rather hoping to give you insight to the kinds of things that will ultimately help me choose between keeping my children in the school system, or withdrawing them and choosing to homeschool. For the upcoming school year, I need my children to have access to interesting, engaging, and rigorous instruction and work. I need for them to have access to AIG resources and meaningful enrichment content (music, art, PE). I would prefer that they have a connection to a teacher and classmates. In thinking about virtual learning, I would prefer an option that allows some flexibility and does not have them sitting in front of a computer all day long. I would very much prefer to keep them enrolled at BES and continue to support our school system, but I am also confident that I can meet their needs on my own, should the virtual option not be a good fit for our family. In order to make this decision, I need clear communication about what the virtual option entails and what resources will be available to my children. Thank you so much for your time, hard work, and thoughtfulness on this matter. I know these are hard decisions and you will do your best to meet the needs of all the many children of Transylvania County.

Sincerely,  
Liz Gibbs

Dr.McDaris and Board Members,

My name is Mike Drake and I am a teacher at Brevard Middle School. I am writing this to ask that we start the school year on Plan C. I will make two points, one quickly and the other will take a bit longer.

1. We can do on -line learning safely, we have a proven track record of this and it will only get better with clear guidelines and practice.

2. I have worked very hard to keep myself healthy and safe since the shutdown. I live in Brevard with no family members close. My closest family are elderly parents over 1000 miles away. That being said if I get sick I am on my own.

Since the shutdown, I have not traveled to see family or for vacation. I have not eaten out at a restaurant.I have not been in groups of more than 12. My exposure to others has been very limited. I have limited trips to buy groceries etc.

The thought of working in a school building in a large group while covid cases are escalating is almost unimaginable. This is made more so because we can choose to start the year on-line until the situation is safer to go back.

I hope you will consider my viewpoint.

Sincerely,  
Mike Drake

My public comment for the board:

Countries from South Africa to Finland, including Italy and China have waited for low community infection rates, and incorporated fast testing/contact tracing and closing down contacts from tracing before reopening. Italy is not opening back up until Sept. 14 and they have put 1 billion euros into the opening planning, hired 50,000 additional teachers/staff and done other things you would think of like: smaller groupings, required masks, social distancing, limited groups, and they are incorporating more outdoor learning. What I see us missing is a sustained lower community infection rate, fast testing/contact tracing, allocated funding for the type of staffing, equipment and procedures needed for smaller groups and social distancing, and a plan for a fast shutdown if a student or adult in a school tests positive. We need our schools, it just feels like we are skipping some pretty important steps. My information comes from science magazine, [edsource.org](https://www.edsource.org), and Vanderbilt School of Medicine study of global school reopening strategies. I also find it hard to comprehend that we are even discussing putting children and teachers together for hours and hours when the public isn't even allowed in this meeting due to the virus.

Thank you for sharing my comment,

Rivers Smith

To: Transylvania County School Board and Dr. Jeff McDaris,

I would like to communicate with you about the opening of school in just a few weeks. I know this is a very difficult time for all of you - teachers, administrators, support staffs, coaches, bus drivers, and parents. It is difficult enough, even without Covid-19. I know most of you very well. Over the years we have taught together, worked on committees together, struggled with difficult situations, planned school safety protocols, developed health advisory policies and athletic procedures, just to name a few. Most of these items have been significant and had an impact on the lives of students, staffs, administrators and community.

As a student I graduated from Brevard High School. Later after college and the military I returned to Brevard High as a teacher. I went on become an assistant principal at Brevard High, principal of Brevard Middle School, returned to Brevard High as principal and continued on to an administrative position at the central office. I have an invested interest In Transylvania County Schools and all of those involved.

None of those positions or tasks would have prepared me to deal with the mind-boggling conditions that have been thrust upon you and the school community. I would like to encourage each of you, because I know your jobs at times seem to be thankless. I also know you care deeply for the students, teachers and staffs of Transylvania County. When all is said and done, and you look back over these difficult times be able to say you did the best for the safety of everyone involved.

I do not know all you are having to deal with in the modern school setting, but if I could humbly make a suggestion, it would be to follow "Plan C" (Virtual Learning). This plan would allow a safer start to school for everyone, especially for those individual students and staff members who have at risk health conditions. As things improve with time, changes could be made in increments. Is Plan C easy? No, it is not and it will not please everyone, but overall I think it is the best.

I thank each of you for the time you have spent in reading and listening to what I had to say. Jeff, thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely and prayerfully,

John K. Tinsley



My name is Emily Atkinson, and I am a teacher from Brevard Middle School.

I understand that you are faced with a difficult decision about the reopening of schools. You must weigh the needs of parents, the educational needs and emotional well being of students as well as the safety of all stakeholders and the wider community. According to the very helpful interactive map created by the Harvard Global Health Initiative (<https://globalepidemics.org/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression/>), Transylvania County is currently experiencing accelerated spread, calling for extensive test and trace and/or stay at home orders. This data is based on a seven-day rolling average of positive test results adjusted to show a number of cases per 100,000 people. Of course we do not have a population of 100,000, but this metric allows us to compare our infection and spread in relation to more highly populated areas. Henderson and Buncombe have higher case loads than us, but still fall within the accelerated spread. Mecklenburg and Gaston counties are classified as at a “tipping point,” with stay at home orders recommended. Our neighbor, Jackson County is also at this tipping point of case numbers.

Several school systems around the state have decided that for the safety of their students and staff they will begin the school year with between four and nine weeks of remote instruction (<https://www.newsobserver.com/article244306117.html>). Using the infection rate data from the Harvard Global Health Initiative, the following counties with lower or similar infection rates that Transylvania County (13.3 per 100,000 as of 7/20) have chosen Option C (remote learning): Scotland County (8.2 cases per 100,000, nine weeks remote instruction), Chatham County (11.3 per 100,000, nine weeks remote instruction), Warren County (13.8 per 100,000, one quarter remote), Chapel Hill-Carrboro (14.4 per 100,000, 9 weeks), and Orange County (14.4 per 100,000, 4 weeks). I would add to this that according to Transylvania Public Health, there has been a 69% increase in cases in the past 7 days within our county ([https://www.transylvaniatimes.com/home/customer\\_files/news\\_story\\_pdfs/daily\\_covid-19\\_update\\_3.pdf](https://www.transylvaniatimes.com/home/customer_files/news_story_pdfs/daily_covid-19_update_3.pdf)).

The conditions required to ensure any level of safety under Plan B will alter the school environment so it is unrecognizable. Even this will put students, school employees and all of our families at great risk. It is important to remember that the choice of Plan C is not permanent. It can and should be reviewed at regular intervals so we can return to school as soon as it is safe. I would like nothing more than to return to teaching in a safe environment. At this time, it is not safe.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and doing what is best for Transylvania County.

Emily Atkinson, Teacher

To Transylvania County School Board and Dr. Jeff McDarius *[sic]*

As a retired school teacher, I know the importance of a good education. I can't imagine how distraught educators are with the thought of not starting school on a regular schedule. The starting of school was always an exciting time for me. However, during this time I feel that it's not in the best interest of our students to return to school in person. Positive cases of the coronavirus in our county and state are rising. Also I'm concerned about people that I love dearly, my son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter, being in a regular school environment during this pandemic. Therefore, I'm asking the Board of Education to vote to open schools virtually on plan C.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the BOE and Dr. McDarius *[sic]* for the great job you do. I really appreciate the many sacrifices, difficult decisions, etc., that go into the job you must do.

Please know that I pray for our schools often. May God give you the peace and wisdom that you need during this most difficult time.

Sincerely,  
Janet Tinsley

Dear School Board Members,

Thank you for representing our community during this incredibly difficult time. I know your decisions about school this Fall are the most difficult you've been tasked with.

I wanted to reach out as a parent of a Brevard Elementary School student. I did complete the survey several weeks ago; however, my opinions have changed due to the rise in COVID-19 cases locally and also the surge in cases in surrounding areas in South Carolina. Initially, I had thought it best to do a blend of in person and virtual, but now with this new information I think it is only safe to do virtual only at least for the first quarter.

I understand that virtual only is detrimental for students socially and for those students who need special needs services. But at this current moment, jeopardizing the health of teachers, staff and students could create a greater set back in the long term.

Many communities across the country are creating solutions for students who need services and child care while parents work. I would like our district to explore some of these solutions rather than sending students back to the classroom.

I know younger individuals seem less affected by COVID-19, but this virus is so new we don't fully understand the health ramifications long term. Also some children have had severe complications. Teachers and staff are at much higher risk for complications and death. I cannot imagine sending students back at this time.

Best Regards,

Keavy McAbee  
Brevard, NC

Dear School Board Member and staff,

My goal is to keep this brief and succinct. I will likely not succeed at this so please accept my apologies before the second paragraph as I'm assuming you have a lot of emails to plow through and a lot of data to study in preparation for tonight's meeting.

First off, let me thank you for serving our community, for serving me as a parent and for guiding an exemplary school district that has served myself and most of all educated my 12-year-old son, well ever since kindergarten.

I have read the NC StrongSchools Tool Kit and also spoken or otherwise communicated with several educators and I am coming away with one overarching impression that I can read between every printed line and hear in between each carefully worded sentence. I cannot keep myself from urging you as a school district to take the courageous step and opt for Plan C, remote learning only.

I urge you to focus on allocating our taxpayer funds and your and our educators' energy on building out a strong, bold remote learning program, instead of trying to get a passing grade doing both Plan B AND Plan C, when all indications point to schools being incredibly bad places to experiment with Covid-19-proof protocols, due to the age of the population, the physical layout of buildings, the shortage of funds staff and supplies and the simple fact that in-class instructions are incongruent with social distancing, no matter how many masks are being worn and how many times high-touch surfaces are wiped down.

As a public school parent, I harken back to all the back-to-school shopping lists, furnished to me by my teachers, that have told me year after year that my tax dollars do not stretch far enough to keep kids relatively healthy in an indoor, crowded environment. I have purchased wipes, hand sanitizers etc. for years and I know that by mid-semester my teacher is buying them with dollars out of her own pocket, if I don't prod her for a supplemental shopping list.

Children do not social distance. They don't do it as distracted and curious kindergarteners, they don't do it as awkward middle schoolers growing into giant feet and newly-long limbs, and they don't do it as socially-hyper-focused high schoolers, practicing to be adults. This means, educators and staff will be busy during all school hours, keeping their pupils apart. I have exhausted myself this summer keeping one child from bumping into people, based on this unscientific exercise, I can assure you that little learning will take place, when teachers are trying to keep 12 or more students from infringing on each others' 6-foot diameter (I'm assuming they don't get 6-foot radiuses, since that will seriously bust all classroom's physical capacities). I have spent a semester as a teacher's assistant and remember well the time spent on corralling fifth-grade student into a straight line in the hallway. This makes me enough of an authority to tell you that burdening educators with enforcing the NC StrongSchools social distancing guidelines on top of masks on faces (not on foreheads or under chins), will severely impact the quality of teaching as well as limit the time spent on actual instruction and will easily leave more students behind than advancing even the most focused student, who is a freak of nature and able to shut out all distractions to ingest new complex material.

Why would we spend our hard-gained public education dollars on cleaning supplies, markers, barriers, plexiglass etc. when the NC StrongSchool guidelines, combined with the lack of testing, will inevitably mean that students and cohorts will have to isolate at home and schools will be decimated and run on limited capacities by mid-September/early October. Kids will have colds, flu-like symptoms galore - as they do every year - and even without a single model, I believe that not a single student will spend the entire semester in-person in school. Each and

everyone will be at home at some point, many will be home several times, at which point Plan C will come into play whether it is an afterthought or a full-fledged mode of teaching. This, in addition, to all the kids that will be kept home voluntarily, because they have elderly family living with them or are high-risk themselves. I would urge you to spend our funds on building out our remote learning module instead, because it will inevitably be pressed into service.

I want to commend our school district on being more pandemic-proof than most. I guess we have blizzard bags to thank for that. Let's build on this and problem-solve how to reach each and every student with chromebooks, Wi-Fi access, parent volunteers, older students mentors for younger students for credit. Let's divert funds that would be spent on cleaning supplies, heating buildings, school sports to create a strong Plan C. Whatever we learn and fund during this fall/winter semester will not be wasted as we will almost certainly need to reach for it again and again over the coming years.

If we lose federal dollars, we remedy this at the polls. I for one, do not want to be cowed by our federal government with petty potentially illegal threats, after it has NOT DONE THE WORK this summer, but now is feeling free to ask us to risk our children's long-term health, as well as the health of our staff and teachers and our community as a whole. When schools shut down and Covid numbers spike and children, parents, grandparents, school bus drivers and teachers die, those federal dollars will feel worthless. I'm almost certain that our state legislature, will also fall short, in giving us extra funds when in-school instructions lead to terrible outcomes. We will not be rewarded for being a good little school district. Instead, let's be a courageous, bold and caring school district that is willing to make the best of this fall and winter, and come back strong for the new normal next spring. It is my belief that your educators, your staff and your parent and student population will thank you for it in the long run.

Thank you for reading and considering this appeal.

Geraldine Dinkins

Good Morning,

My name is Mary McKeller and I am a former student and employee of Transylvania County Schools. My work during this past year was so rewarding, but it got cut short because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While it was a difficult one, IT WAS THE RIGHT CHOICE. To close the schools and move to online-learning allowed for a safer environment for our students and our staff during the beginning of this pandemic. **But it has only gotten worse.**

**The choice to go to in-person school this fall is WRONG.** The number of infections is increasing every day, and by sending our students and teachers to school you are putting everyone at risk. It would be nearly impossible to follow social distancing guidelines in an elementary school setting, even more difficult for Pre-K.

**I urge you to make the right decision and opt for Plan C for this school year.** If not, there is a very likely chance we will see our students and teachers get sick, and possibly even die from this virus.

I hope you make the right choice for our district.

Stay safe,

Mary McKeller

First of all... You know us...we LOVE Transylvania County Schools and THANK YOU for your work. These decisions you are having to make are so difficult.

As a parent of a child with a slower immune response due to his brain cancer, our plate has been overloaded with uncertainty since diagnosis. I am so scared to assume the risk of adding the extra uncertainties of the effects of COVID 19. As parents, this risk feels too overwhelming. As an educator, I also am feeling that anxiety of going to work, and bringing it home to my vulnerable family. This is heartbreaking for so many teachers and I feel for them on such a deep and personal level.

Right now while data proves the numbers in our country, state and county clearly are continuing to rise, I personally think this is a wild time to try to put hundreds of humans back into buildings together. It feels like an experiment, even with the best of intentions and everyone trying to use best safety practices. We still cannot even go to parks or restaurants, or have these meetings in person...but we are going to try to convene in huge numbers with our most precious assets- children, educators, and the staff that keeps schools operating.

I also truly realize that schools are still the safest place for many children, even with a novel pandemic virus that is nowhere near under control. Both of my boys thrive in the classroom and it was insanely hard last spring for them emotionally. They come from a family that is equipped and able to love, nurture, and provide for them. School family still means the world, even to families in safe homes. TCS is the most loving school family on the planet. We are eternally grateful.

My question is this: Should a family decide to do remote learning, and the numbers improve and it feels safer- will the students be allowed to come back to school? What will the guidelines be for such situations? My rising 2nd and 6th graders have been counting the days down to get back into a classroom setting, but right now it does not seem responsible for us to assume the risk. We are so torn up. I know that our situation is different, however I am very empathetic to all sides of this. Health has to be the number one priority right now.

Thank you again for your dedication, tireless efforts and successes in making TCS the very best public school system.

Thank you for being our family. We can't imagine our personal journey without your support. Please know we remain dedicated to you all and all of our children. #TCSyes

Clare Desmelik

To whom it may concern.

As parents with school age children in Transylvania county, we have always appreciated everything the schools, teachers, staff and administration does to ensure the students safely receive a quality education. With the current exponential increase in covid-19 cases in the county, state and nation, we will be opting for the virtual learning to start the school year. It is my hope that if case numbers come down to reasonable levels our children can attend in person school, but at this time safety of our family is paramount. Thanks for all your hard work during this trying time.

Oliver Banks

PS from Beth Banks....

The plan where some are virtual and some are on campus would be very hard for teachers to do both methods effectively.

I also think you will have a mass exodus of faculty leaving to find other jobs.



Good evening,

As a veteran teacher who has long supported TCS and worked diligently to promote its values, I have to reject the idea that we go back to school on Plan B, particularly when the governor is allowing school districts to return on Plan C.

We call ourselves part of the community, and in doing so we must do what is best for our county's residents, many of whom are elderly or who have health conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID. Cooperative, empathetic, and responsible community members do not put their fellow community members at risk, particularly when we can make choices to keep others safe.

We have clear, direct evidence that schools act as vectors for the virus. Large-scale studies show that even though many middle and high school students are asymptomatic, this is not the case for all of them, as reported in the *New York Times*. Furthermore, they will pass the virus to one another and spread it to their teachers, families, and the community at large. It is unfair and unethical to force those of us at the schools to play a role in this catastrophe.

Our local hospital is understaffed and ill prepared to cope with this crisis. We have 92 beds at most. We have 6-9 ICU beds and 6 ventilators. The number of cases in the county continues to rise and if we return to in-person instruction, we will have to know we played a role when the hospital becomes overwhelmed and doctors begin choosing who gets a ventilator and who doesn't. Virtually learning may not stop everyone from getting sick, but it will slow the spread and allow our healthcare system to save more people as we flatten the curve.

Many of us are mentors and models of ethical, responsible behavior for our students. Sometimes we are the only role models in their lives. If we return to school, we are giving tacit approval of the situation at hand. I cannot in good faith demonstrate ethical behavior if I do not speak up now. Furthermore, how do I even look at them when one of their parents or grandparents dies and wonder if I'm the one who gave it to them? How do they react if their teacher gets it? Do they blame themselves? I struggle to even imagine the emotional weight I would feel around my neck.

After a brief perusal of the BHS faculty, we can immediately identify that about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of our faculty is considered high risk. My wife is one of those people...Think of what you're asking me to do or to choose by requiring me to put myself in a dangerous situation that could kill one of the people I love the most. Please take 5 seconds right now to imagine her on a ventilator struggling to breathe. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

I understand schools play a role in feeding children and in providing a place for young kids to go while their parents work. However, there have been structural issues for decades that have undermined food scarcity and childcare. These issues are not the problem of schools. While it's generous and compassionate to provide these services for vulnerable families, it is absolutely false to believe this is the role of the school system. Our federal and state government play a role in helping the less fortunate. Just because a family needs help doesn't necessarily mean it's the schools' responsibility to provide these services. We have taken on these problems because we care, but we must, without question, demand funding and the structural support to fulfill our main mission, teaching children.

We know there are students and parents already infected with the virus in our community, and we know that not all parents or students will stay at home when they have symptoms or have

been diagnosed. My uncle works at a VA center in SC, and they have adults who will provide false information about their symptoms so they can still see a doctor regarding other health issues. There is no question in my mind the same will occur with parents, students, and community members here.

If we go back to school, who decides the protocols in place? The Ed Center? They can provide social distancing measures. The Board, who is holding this very meeting virtually? The health department who has strict preventative measures in place that we cannot imitate? In short, all the decision makers don't have to sit in a room with 15 kids, they don't have to monitor the hallways while 100 kids walk past 4 times a day, they don't have to fight with kids to get them to stop making out in the hallways, they don't have to ask kids to step back because, let's face it, kids (and many adults) don't know what 6 feet looks like, they don't have to comfort some crying kid who lost their boyfriend from 6 feet away, they don't have to coach kids on how to deal with uncertainty, they don't have to share bathrooms, desks, pens, and door knobs with potentially infected people, they just don't have to share our very frightening and impossible reality.

Other TCS employees in addition to teachers do have to share our reality though. Brevard High School janitors are some of the best in the world. They have impossible jobs that they simply cannot accomplish everyday. They drive buses. They break up fights. They help with fire drills and code yellow drills. They stock the bathrooms, sweep the floors, wipe down the desks, clean white boards, get rid of graffiti, drive buses, and do innumerable other tasks, but they are not trained cleaners like one sees in the hospital. They are trained to do their jobs, and it is irresponsible to ask them to bear the burden of keeping our rooms virus free--they simply do not have the time or training to do so.

For me, this is a question of looking in the mirror when we finally (and hopefully) put this virus behind us. Can I look in the mirror or be alone with my thoughts before I drop off to sleep and ask myself: did you do everything to be a compassionate community member who tried his best to make sure others were safe? If we are asked to go back to school while our state continues to see the number of sick people rising and I return to physical school, I cannot say that I did my best.

This is a complicated and difficult time, and the decision as to how to restart school has myriad issues that are hard to consider. I do not like virtual school. I do not like looking at students on a screen. However, I prefer seeing them on-screen learning and talking with one another to falling asleep at night and having nightmares about my level of responsibility if they or their parents or their grandparents got the virus because of me.

I am begging you, and I am a proud person who doesn't often beg and who even less often admits it, to let us start the school year on Plan C. Until we can fund the CDC requirements, until the number of positive cases begins to fall quickly, until NCAE has a spot at the discussion table, and until we can be sure we are being the caring, compassionate, thoughtful, and clear-eyed community members we profess to be, we must not return to in-person instruction.

Regards,

Josh Tinsley

To our School Board

Thank you for taking the time to gather our feedback and take that into consideration before tonight's meeting. I know how hard these decisions must be and I greatly appreciate your discernment in this process. I feel confident you have our children at the center of these decisions.

I have many questions but most of them are dependent on the scenario the school board chooses for our children beginning this fall.

My request right now is that we go ahead and schedule a follow up parent Q & A as soon as possible with the school board or school administrators once reopening details are shared this evening. Time is of the essence so parents and caregivers can begin planning work needs, family needs, school supplies, technology needs.

Again, thank you!  
MacKenzie Henry

Hello, I am a parent of a Transylvania county School district student. I feel as though we are moving towards the safest option for our children, option C. I agree that this is the right move for our community.

However, this has me very concerned as a parent because our spring online learning experience was not ideal. What preparations is the school district making, and how are we as parents able to be informed of those preparations? Specifically I would like to know how Brevard high School is preparing to deliver learning via distance education. We all understand that the abrupt pivot in the spring did not prepare anyone for a good remote learning experience. What concerns me as a parent is that I'm not receiving any communication that would lead me to believe a fall online learning experience would be any different.

I'm very concerned that parents will unenroll their students and turn to more trusted providers of online learning. High school education is crucial to a healthy adult life. I'm very concerned about unenrollment and revenue loss for the school district, yet as a parent I do not want to jeopardize my child's education. What communication can be provided to parents so we know and trust our students will be experiencing a productive learning opportunity this fall?

Thank you

Julie Workman

I appreciate that there are no easy answers for the many questions surrounding the opening of schools for the upcoming school year. However, I believe that the current best option is to open virtually until the larger community virus spread is controlled.

Over the past weeks we have seen an alarming increase in the number of Transylvania County residents who have contracted the virus, the result of the loosening of restrictions combined with the summer increase in visitors to our county. Opening school buildings to students, even on staggered schedules with precautions, can only serve to put more pressure on the spread of the virus in the community. It can only serve to worsen the current deteriorating situation.

We can debate all day about death rates and who is most likely to spread the virus, but I believe that most people would rather not get sick. I know I don't want to get COVID-19 and risk what could happen. The risk of opening the schools is not just a risk to the students and staff and their families, it is also a risk to most people who live here. Opening education to in-person instruction just seems irresponsible while the spread of the virus is already increasing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Roger Atkinson

Hello Superintendent McDaris,

I am a parent of three at Brevard Elementary School.

I am writing to ask you to ensure that our students, educators, and community stays safe by voting for Transylvania County Schools to begin instruction virtually on plan C. This is the only way we can ensure our schools do not become centers of infection and spread.

I know this is a difficult decision, and I know it won't be popular with everyone.

We absolutely LOVE our school and trust that every possible measure will be taken for everyone's safety, but it seems an unreachable goal to open the school for in-person learning safely in August, especially with limited time and financial resources to meet recommended guidelines.

Please know that we desperately want/need our children to go to school so that I can return to work and for our youngest to receive the emotional/social support of in-person learning, which she greatly needs for her development; however, I am a high risk individual and my risk of infection will greatly increase by sending our children to school.

Thankfully we have a flexible situation with options, but I know many families have no choice and urgently need school services. I do not have answers to this, but I am confident that members of this county, your board, and the countless teachers and staff on the front lines do!

Please consider starting the year virtually in order to take more time to implement options that are both safe for teachers/staff/families while also providing these necessary services to families.

As of Friday, Transylvania County saw a 70% increase in COVID-19 cases over the last 7 days. When school closed in March, TC had no cases.....yet with this current surge schools want to reopen. This seems irresponsible.

Thank you in advance for doing the right thing and doing what is best for Transylvania County.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email / call / text me.

Sincerely,  
Rhea Avera

Dear Board of Education,

If you don't have time to read all of this, please read the PS! ;)

Wow. What a huge responsibility you all have tonight! We have been so hopeful for a different set of circumstances going into this school year as I know you have, too. We are grateful to our school community/employees/bus drivers/food service etc. etc. who have been working endlessly to plan for this potential re-entry.

Seeing the numbers in Transylvania County begin to rise steadily after the 4th of July was so disheartening and imagining a safe re-entry in 3 1/2 weeks with the data we have now is much more difficult than when our numbers stayed at 7 and 22 for weeks at a time. ( I realize the numbers are all about the testing, but still.)

**I am writing to ask that you consider voting for Plan C tonight. Below are my reasons:**

1. **North Carolina's 3 W's**, from recent experience working with sixty 14-16 year olds: **Wash** - pretty easy to implement, hard to monitor. **Wear** - fairly easy to implement, with lots of masks on the ground and/or left behind, easier to monitor. **Wait** - easy to implement with all sorts of clever tactics, signage, markings etc. And, nearly impossible to maintain after the first couple of days. Social distancing is counter-intuitive for this age group. **For all three, constant reminding.** The stress in a leadership role is high. And, these are only three of the requirements!
2. The difficulty with the social/physical distancing during times when you don't have someone watching over them (hallways, bathrooms, etc.) means that if someone at school tests positive, the contact tracing is much less effective. If a cluster tests positive, even harder.
3. Because the contact tracing is harder, my final reason is that I think, if we open, we will likely have to revert to Plan C at some point.

I believe starting school with Plan B and then returning to Plan C would have a worse effect on the students, teachers and families, both physically and emotionally, than the opposite. Going forward is always easier than going backward. Please consider a C --> B opening based on the numbers in Transylvania County going down and not up.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of all the variables. I realize there are many many more than I have presented here.

Sincerely,  
Gretchen Greene

PS - Could it be appropriate to provide a "Go Fund Me" to help get necessary tools to those students/families who need it? Or supplies to the schools since funding is an issue? Computers/Wifi/Food etc.? I feel it might be an opportunity to bridge the gap in our county. I don't know if that is allowed or not, though. Just a thought!

Dear Dr. McDaris,

Saying that we are living in unprecedented times is an understatement right now, and I think it casts a false light on the actual situation because our nation and world has, in fact, faced down terrible diseases previously. We know what to do: wear masks, wash our hands, stay at safe distances from others, and stay home whenever possible.

Reopening school for face-to-face learning will have catastrophic consequences. As of July 15, Transylvania Regional Hospital claims to have 92 hospital beds and no more than 6 ICU beds, with 6 ventilators at most. They cannot handle the influx of patients when these dark circumstances come to our county, and come to our county they will.

Almost  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Florida's school children have COVID. We know from the Israeli attempt at returning to school when they were having about 10 new daily cases ended up with 2,026 students and staff were confirmed infected and 28,000 were quarantined. We know 47% were infected in schools. Will we 100% reflect what happened there? Who knows, but the evidence certainly shows we will suffer by returning to face-to-face contact.

A leaked, but confirmed, document from the CDC clearly called returning to physical school a "high risk" activity. Until we can meet the CDC guidelines 100% and until new cases at least plateau, if not drop precipitously, we cannot return to school. Furthermore, NC has been deemed a "red zone" in a leaked White House document.

How can we close schools when there are 1,000 cases but reopen when there are 90,000 cases in the state? How can we be asked to sacrifice our lives when we sacrifice so much already? How can the Board of Education hold virtual meetings with 7 people and we be asked to have in person classes with 15 or more?

We cannot keep kids from kissing in the hallway. We cannot keep kids from wearing inappropriate clothing. We cannot keep kids from touching one another on the playground. We cannot disinfect every classroom every period. We cannot control these issues during "normal" times. Healthcare workers are getting sick and dying, and they have training and equipment to avoid the sickness. How can we possibly have the same level of protection as them?

For all the aforementioned reasons, it is unconscionable for us to return to face-to-face instruction. We ask that we fully fund NCDHHS guidelines and metrics for returning to physical school and that we have a meaningful place at the table in discussions about returning to physical school.

In order to help us reach these goals, we are asking everyone who values our students, teachers, and community to sign our petition by going to [NCAE.org](https://www.ncae.org). Furthermore, we ask that you vote for Transylvania County Schools to return to school virtually, using plan C.

Sincerely,  
Jim Leatherwood  
Director of Bands  
Brevard High School



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Sincerely,  
Rhonda Walsingham

Good morning Dr. McDaris,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well! First and foremost, thank you for everything that you do for our community. Although I want to be back in my classroom teaching my students, I do not feel safe returning to in-person teaching at this time. Certainly, I know that there are many things to consider.

Thank you again for all you do and thank you for listening,

Connie Newman  
Spanish Teacher  
Brevard Middle School

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you asking to adopt Plan C for the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Transylvania County numbers are still rising, and there is at least one teacher (and parent of 2) hospitalized and 3 confirmed cases of BHS students right now with COVID-19.

I care deeply for our students and TCS staff, and believe in person school is absolutely the best way to learn, just not yet. It's just not safe for a mass gathering inside buildings at this time.

Thank you for your leadership and your professionalism, and I am proud to be a TCS family member. God bless you with discernment in the best way forward.

Respectfully yours,  
Carolyn Smith

Dear Dr. McDaris,

I hope you are doing well. I am writing to ask you to consider Plan C for Transylvania County Schools. There are still too many unknowns regarding COVID-19. Plan C will keep students and staff safe and will give children and teachers consistency in the method and delivery of instruction. Teachers will rise to the occasion with Plan C, to deliver quality instruction to their students. A standard platform of delivery can be used across grade levels. Grade levels across the county can virtually work together to share lesson plans and ideas. Administration at each school (principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, along with school social workers and counselors) will have more time to check on students and families not showing up for online learning and to find and offer these families assistance. Verizon and Comporium can become even better community partners to help make this happen. Childcare is an issue with many families, however with Plan B, childcare will still be an issue.

I am a wife, a mom, a daughter and a teacher. My husband is an eye doctor. His practice has managed to stay COVID-19 free by the staff and patients wearing masks, by each doctor only spending 10 minutes at a time with a patient and by staff cleaning exam rooms every 10 minutes. My husband and I have 3 children. Our youngest son, Lei, will be a fifth grader at Brevard Elementary. We will be choosing TCS Online Learning Path for Lei. My parents, Al and Betty Plemmons, are 88 and 89 years old. If Plan B is chosen, I will no longer be able to visit and check on them, for fear of giving them the virus. Up to this point, I have been social distancing. I order groceries from Super Walmart curbside pickup, I shop online, I order take out instead of dining in at restaurants and we canceled our vacation.

In less than a month, if our schools begin on Plan B, teachers will be in classrooms with students 7½ hours a day. If someone in a classroom has COVID-19, the chances of someone else in the classroom contracting the virus significantly increases after 15 minutes. For 4 months, I have tried so hard to be a part of the solution. Plan B is not part of the solution. Are our schools ready to take this risk? Am I ready to take this risk?

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Sincerely,  
Kimberly Plemmons Williams

*Kindergarten Teacher*  
*Pisgah Forest Elementary School*

Dear School Board Members,

I know this email is coming to you within 24 hours of having to make the decision on how TCS will move forward with the 2020-2021 school year. I hope you will have the opportunity to read these thoughts of mine and consider them as you all go forth in making a plan for TCS.

I do not believe that it is safe for students, faculty, or staff to return to our buildings this fall. This hurts me deeply to type. I care deeply about the students I teach and their well-being. I have had many days and nights where I sit and worry about students whom I know school is their safe place. I worry about the students that I have tried on many occasions to get in contact with and have been unsuccessful since the middle of March. I worry about the students who have been in contact with me frequently since March 13 because they are lonely and just want someone to recognize their thoughts and feelings. However, it is just not safe for us to return to being in a school building.

Last week, the University of Colorado - Boulder published their preliminary results to an aerosol study being conducted on musicians. The music community knew the results would not be good, but we were not expecting the results that were published. After reviewing the preliminary results, I have made a professional decision that I will not be part of any indoor music performing activities until COVID-19 is under control. Performing music inside with multiple people is more than not safe, it's terrifying. Even voice projection ("teacher voice") produces more droplets that travel distances and can contaminate the air in spaces such as a classroom. The music profession has recognized this as an issue and recommends teachers to wear a microphone along with a mask so they do not have to project their voice.

I hope you have noticed that I keep saying "return to buildings" and "indoor". I have confidence that teaching and learning(including music) can occur outside safely with precautions. Social distancing, face masks, hand washing/sanitizing, staying in one location while speaking/playing, and many other steps would need to continue. Research is showing us that the gathering in small groups outside is much safer as droplets have a larger space to dissipate in.

With Transylvania County being one of the rainiest places on Earth, I am not advocating for outdoor school. What I am advocating for is outdoor enrichment opportunities for TCS students as they continue learning virtually. This would provide some of the necessary socialization conducive to child development while keeping our community as safe as possible. These outdoor enrichment activities could include science experiments/labs, working at the farm/greenhouse, construction projects, and band/choir/theater practices. This would require calendar planning and convincing some teachers, but several of our schools already have a tradition of career, STEM, and other enrichment nights.

I recognize that this is a difficult task with which you have been assigned. I know you have spent a lot of time researching, listening to opinions, and pondering the reopening of schools. I have complete faith and confidence that you have the best interest of the students, faculty, staff, and community in mind. Thank you for all that you do and please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions regarding the information I have provided above.

**Katerina Canter**

Band Director

Rosman Middle and High School

Dear Dr. McDaris,

We do not have clear evidence that supports the safe opening of school buildings to students, teachers, and staff. Likewise, we do not have clear evidence that refutes the safe opening of school buildings to students, teachers, and staff. If schools reopen for any kind of face-to-face instruction, teachers, students, and staff will be asked to be guinea pigs in one big science experiment, and I ask that you consider whether the benefits outweigh the risks.

Reopening school for face-to-face learning could have catastrophic consequences. As of July 15, Transylvania Regional Hospital claims to have 92 hospital beds and no more than 6 ICU beds, with 6 ventilators at most. Have you inquired about the ages and conditions of those currently hospitalized? Our county's positive case count and hospitalizations are beginning to grow more rapidly, so is now really a good time to open school buildings? This virus does not discriminate based on age, race, or socioeconomic status. None of us really knows for sure at this point who will end up an unlucky COVID-19 case.

Comparing US schools reopening to schools reopening in other countries is like comparing apples to oranges, but I understand it's the best information we have available. Schools have only reopened in countries where virus-spread was initially under control. The virus-spread does not seem to be under control here, and I have doubts about having the resources available to do what's necessary to really try to protect teachers, staff, and students. I still can't find disinfecting wipes for my own household use. Some doctors are recommending teachers wear N95 masks, but they are not readily available for a reasonable price. The [newest study from South Korea](#) that seems to suggest older children spread the virus as easily as adults is frightening for those of us being asked to go into middle and high school buildings.

How can we close schools when there are 1,000 cases but reopen when there are 90,000 cases in the state, and when we have little evidence available to us as to the long-term effects of this virus? How can we be asked to sacrifice our health when we sacrifice so much already? Will we be required to use sick days if we have to quarantine? Will we have to quarantine if someone in our household is exposed? Our 4 member household will have a member in three different schools. The likelihood of one of us being exposed is great, so I can't help but ask what this will mean for my family's livelihood. How can the Board of Education hold virtual meetings with 7 people and we be asked to have in-person classes with 15 or more? How can doctors' offices still have their waiting rooms closed, but ask us to open our classrooms? There are still so many unanswered questions and contradictions!

How will my husband console a crying child with a mask on, keeping six feet of distance? I have heard countless scenarios of him being called to classrooms to retrieve an upset or unruly child because he's one of the only ones who might console him. And what does he do? He carries the child around on his hip while teaching his PE classes at BES. So, the answer to my rhetorical question is that he can't console an upset child with a mask on, keeping six feet of distance, and he won't. He'll scoop him up and love on him, thus putting him and his family at greater risk.

And with older students, we cannot keep kids from kissing in the hallway. We cannot keep kids from wearing inappropriate clothing, and we will not be able to enforce the wearing of masks-- just ask the many vocal anti-masker parents in our community! Some teachers will need microphones for our voices to carry through masks. Classroom teaching and learning will not look or feel anything like the classroom teaching and learning teachers and students have known with no physical collaboration, no sharing of hands-on manipulatives, no think-pair-share and other proximity-based teaching strategies, and minimal movement within the classroom--to name just a few limitations of socially-distanced teaching and learning. Can you envision children having their lunch six feet apart, not really able to socialize with friends? There will either be more loneliness or mutiny! As a parent, I'm not convinced this is an environment I want my children in, much less one I feel great about teaching children in. Not to mention, teachers cannot possibly effectively disinfect every classroom and every piece of equipment every period. Again, do the benefits outweigh the risks?

For all the aforementioned reasons, it is a crapshoot for us to return to face-to-face instruction. I ask that we fully fund NCDHHS guidelines and metrics for returning to physical school and that we have a meaningful place at the table in discussions about returning to physical school.

I ask that you recommend for Transylvania County Schools to return to school virtually, using plan C to buy us some time until we know more. If you plan to recommend Plan B, I hope that you will consider spending your days in classrooms when schools open, experiencing with teachers what you are going to ask us to do.

Thank you for your leadership during this time. I do not envy your position.

Sincerely,  
Meg Buchanan

Dear Mr. McDaris,

I would like to share my concerns about reopening schools in Transylvania County. I am a veteran teacher in the school system, and I feel overwhelmed when I think about the health and safety of students and staff members during the pandemic. We know what to do: wear masks, wash our hands, stay at safe distances from others, and stay home whenever possible.

My fear is that putting students back in the classroom will cause even greater community spread. I have been watching the number of positive COVID 19 cases increase each day in our county. I worry about students bringing home the virus to their caregivers and many of those are grandparents or great-grandparents. I constantly think about the risk to my own family members.

Reopening school for face-to-face learning will have catastrophic consequences. As of July 15, Transylvania Regional Hospital claims to have 92 hospital beds and no more than 6 ICU beds, with 6 ventilators at most. They cannot handle the influx of patients when these dark circumstances come to our county, and come to our county they will.

How can we close schools when there are 1,000 cases but reopen when there are 90,000 cases in the state? How can we be asked to sacrifice our lives when we sacrifice so much already? How can the Board of Education hold virtual meetings with 7 people and we be asked to have in person classes with 15 or more?

Healthcare workers are getting sick and dying, and they have training and equipment to avoid the sickness. How can we possibly have the same level of protection as them? Throughout the summer, I have been talking with other teachers about planning new routines, organizing student supplies, and trying to determine how to provide the level of protection in the classroom that will be needed. Many questions come to mind and most of them are still unanswered.

Please vote for Transylvania County Schools to return to school virtually, using plan C. We value our students, staff, and community! Let's keep everyone safe and healthy.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Cabe



Dear Mr. Jeff McDaris,

Saying that we are living in unprecedented times is an understatement right now, and I think it casts a false light on the actual situation because our nation and world has, in fact, faced down terrible diseases previously. We know what to do: wear masks, wash our hands, stay at safe distances from others, and stay home whenever possible.

Reopening school for face-to-face learning will have catastrophic consequences. As of July 15, Transylvania Regional Hospital claims to have 92 hospital beds and no more than 6 ICU beds, with 6 ventilators at most. They cannot handle the influx of patients when these dark circumstances come to our county, and come to our county they will.

Almost  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Florida's school children have COVID. We know from the Israeli attempt at returning to school when they were having about 10 new daily cases ended up with 2,026 students and staff were confirmed infected and 28,000 were quarantined. We know 47% were infected in schools. Will we 100% reflect what happened there? Who knows, but the evidence certainly shows we will suffer by returning to face-to-face contact.

A leaked, but confirmed, document from the CDC clearly called returning to physical school a "high risk" activity. Until we can meet the CDC guidelines 100% and until new cases at least plateau, if not drop precipitously, we cannot return to school. Furthermore, NC has been deemed a "red zone" in a leaked White House document.

How can we close schools when there are 1,000 cases but reopen when there are 90,000 cases in the state? How can we be asked to sacrifice our lives when we sacrifice so much already? How can the Board of Education hold virtual meetings with 7 people and we be asked to have in person classes with 15 or more?

We cannot keep kids from kissing in the hallway. We cannot keep kids from wearing inappropriate clothing. We cannot keep kids from touching one another on the playground. We cannot disinfect every classroom every period. We cannot control these issues during "normal" times. Healthcare workers are getting sick and dying, and they have training and equipment to avoid the sickness. How can we possibly have the same level of protection as them?

For all the aforementioned reasons, it is unconscionable for us to return to face-to-face instruction. We ask that we fully fund NCDHHS guidelines and metrics for returning to physical school and that we have a meaningful place at the table in discussions about returning to physical school.

In order to help us reach these goals, we are asking everyone who values our students, teachers, and community to sign our petition by going to [NCAE.org](https://www.ncae.org). Furthermore, we ask that you vote for Transylvania County Schools to return to school virtually, using plan C.

Sincerely,  
Elann Izzard  
(Parent of a BMS and BHS student)

Dear Dr. McDaris,

I hope you are well! Thank you so much for your continuing leadership of TCS, especially during this difficult and critical time. I love and miss my students so much! I love and miss my job so much!

Saying that we are living in unprecedented times is an understatement right now, and I think it casts a false light on the actual situation because our nation and world has, in fact, faced down terrible diseases previously. We know what to do: wear masks, wash our hands, stay at safe distances from others, and stay home whenever possible.

Reopening school for face-to-face learning will have catastrophic consequences. As of July 15, Transylvania Regional Hospital claims to have 92 hospital beds and no more than 6 ICU beds, with 6 ventilators at most. They cannot handle the influx of patients when these dark circumstances come to our county, and come to our county they will.

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How can we close schools when there are 1,000 cases but reopen when there are 90,000 cases in the state? How can we be asked to sacrifice our lives when we sacrifice so much already? How can the Board of Education hold virtual meetings with 7 people and we be asked to have in person classes with 15 or more?

We cannot keep kids from kissing in the hallway. We cannot keep kids from wearing inappropriate clothing. We cannot keep kids from touching one another on the playground. We cannot disinfect every classroom every period. We cannot control these issues during "normal" times. Healthcare workers are getting sick and dying, and they have training and equipment to avoid the sickness. How can we possibly have the same level of protection as them?

Please consider my position: under the current re-opening plan, I am asked to travel to every room in the school to teach music. This means I will be in contact with every child AND every adult in the building. If I contract Covid, the **entire school would have to quarantine!** On a personal note, I have been caring for my elderly parents (92 and 90), both in failing health, since mid-March. While I have lined up part-time caregivers for my return to school, I will be forced to cease all contact with them if I am exposed to such a huge number of people.

For all the aforementioned reasons, it is unconscionable for us to return to face-to-face instruction. We ask that we fully fund NCDHHS guidelines and metrics for returning to physical school and that we have a meaningful place at the table in discussions about returning to physical school.

In order to help us reach these goals, we are asking everyone who values our students, teachers, and community to sign our petition by going to [NCAE.org](https://www.ncae.org). Furthermore, we ask that you vote for Transylvania County Schools to return to school virtually, using plan C. I have made plans with my principal to use an online music platform that will enable me to more effectively teach, whether in person or online.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,

Sarah Moser  
Music Teacher  
Brevard Elementary School

Thank you to each of you as you work diligently to make impossibly difficult decisions regarding how Transylvania County Schools will open this fall. There is much to consider as the question looms of how do we safely reopen our schools and continue to provide top quality education to our children. The safety of staff and students, I know, is at the forefront of this decision for each of you. As a parent of a second grader and also as the spouse of a TC Schools employee, my mind is racing with what ifs and how our family ( and all TC School's families) can remain healthy while ensuring quality education for all. As you consider how schools will reopen, there are several questions I have and would like you to consider as you determine the best course forward for all.

The logistics of in person school are interesting. Assuming " Plan B" is implemented, and half of each class comes to school 2 days per week and the other half comes on alternate days, what plan is in place to ensure there is no cross contamination between the two groups? We know the instructor will be the same, so if a child in "group A"tests positive for COVID, will the entire class be quarantined or would it just be the group with the positive case? What happens if the teacher tests positive? There is already a shortage of substitute teachers. It would be nearly impossible to find one willing to step into a classroom with known exposure. In the event anyone tests positive, would just that classroom be quarantined or would the entire school then go virtual while all quarantine?

I know emotional health is also a consideration. How can you ensure that a child will understand that they can no longer touch and hug their friends and teachers like they did when they were last at school? What happens if they do? Who addresses the confusion caused by this change? Most families have likely been staying home as much as possible and if they are gathering with friends it is with folks they feel comfortable not socially distancing from, thus children will not have been taught how to socially distance interaction should look. The natural response to being reunited with a friend after several months is an exuberant hug. How will students be informed of what the protocol will be and how will that protocol be enforced? What risks does this behavior present and how will TCS ensure that social distancing protocols happen in the early days of reopening when risk may be greatest?

Assuming each class will still have specials- art, music, library and physical education, will those teachers go to each classroom rather than classrooms coming to them? And if that is the case, how are there enough time slots for every class to get their time since currently we know that at least in physical education, that group doubles up with other classes and there will be fewer days to spread classes across since each group will only be present 2 days per week What happens if one of the teachers who works with all classes becomes ill?

If the plan is to keep each class enclosed in their own space, what happens if a child is either academically very behind or advanced? As a parent of a child who is academically ahead, I have a real concern that ,due to the early end of school last year, there will be lots of review and " teaching to the low middle". My child was ahead before COVID and I dare say the gap is bigger now than it was before school let out in March. We work regularly with our daughter at home and she has continued to learn while at home. As a first grader, she went 5 days per week to the AIG teacher for enrichment. Will that still happen? Or will the teaching be limited to one classroom teaching to the middle? Technically, AIG placement doesn't happen until 3rd grade. In the COVID situation, would my child and others like her be unable to get the advanced

learning enrichment? Since community volunteering will be greatly limited, what happens for the children who are behind and need extra help? If they cannot be pulled out of the classroom to obtain that help, will the rest of the class be held back by their abilities? Since social distancing will be required, how will it be possible for learning centers to be used? And without collaboration allowed amongst students at these learning centers, how will the teacher be able to work with students needing either extra help or enrichment? In normal times, groups of students have been able to work together in these centers in collaboration with each other while the teacher helped small groups of children grouped by ability. How will this be addressed in COVID times? If there has ever been a case for grouping students by ability, this is it.

I understand from reading the Governor's directives that masks will be required for all students and staff. How will it be addressed if a child refuses to wear their mask or isn't wearing it correctly?

Since right now the use of playground equipment is not permitted and it is recommended that children to not share materials, what is the plan for recess and how will teachers ensure social distancing is taking place especially since one can assume that kids would probably not wear masks during recess?

What steps are being taken to ensure the safety of the teachers and staff? Who is responsible for the required extra cleanings? Are the janitors going to be paid more to accommodate the additional risk involved in their job during COVID? Are teachers going to be asked to add a cleaning regime to their already impossible list of tasks to accomplish each day? Normally, parents provide cleaning wipes and hand sanitizers for classrooms. With those supplies very difficult to find and needed exponentially more now than in normal times, how will you ensure that the classes all have enough of these supplies and who will pay for them? Will the money needed to buy sanitation supplies come from an already over taxed budget? And if it does come from the standard budget, how does that impact our school system's ability to provide what is needed since even in normal times there are not enough funds to provide for all the needs. We know that most teachers pay for many of their supplies from their pockets and that PTOs are struggling each year to help raise money for some of the basics. Is the impact on the budget detrimental to the education TCS is able to provide?

How will the school system limit the liability of spreading COVID? Even though we know that kids are not as likely as adults to become sick with COVID, what happens if a child or teacher dies from the virus? Does the school system have a plan in place to ensure adequate care for the emotional risk involved in opening schools in the event of a disastrous outcome?

I understand that if the school board opens schools under "Plan B", parents have the option of having their child stay enrolled in the system but do virtual learning. If we opt for virtual learning only, how will that be done? Will the same teacher who our child would have in the classroom be the one doing the virtual teaching? And if so, how is that teacher supposed to manage two different class sets of children plus do virtual teaching? It seems impossible to cover all three groups adequately. Also, will children in the lower grades (K-2) be provided with a chrome book? Or will they need their own device to do the virtual learning? If they are provided with chrome books, is there additional funding to cover those or will that money have to come from

the normal (already overburdened) budget? What will the virtual learning schedule be and what happens if a child needs extra help or if a child is ahead and is not challenged by the work? What resources are being provided to ensure the success of virtual school particularly if in person school is happening simultaneously? My husband is a digital learning specialist in the TC Schools. I saw how much work he put forth in the last months of school to assist with virtual learning. Are the teachers already equip to teach virtually and if not, what is the risk to virtual learners of choosing this option particularly if the teacher is dividing their attention between virtual learners and two other groups of in person learners?

I understand that our school system's budget is dependent upon the number of children enrolled in the first few weeks of school. Assuming " Plan B" is chosen, it will be critical for TCS to provide a comprehensive plan to parents that demonstrates exactly how the virtual learning will happen and how the teacher will be able to adequately and effectively teach three different groups of learners in a 5 day work week. Otherwise, our system risks losing critical funding as parents who feel like a virtual learner will not get the same benefits of an in person learner and who believe that a homeschool curriculum would better serve their child's needs will choose alternative options . If TCS opts for " Plan C" all virtual learning, at least for now, how does that impact funding provided to the school system? And in the end, does it provide a better opportunity for the children since a teacher can fully focus on teaching virtually rather than dividing their efforts amongst 3 different groups of learners? If my child is a virtual learner, and "plan B" is chosen, what happens if my child needs help and the teacher is busy with her other class groups? I understand that additional financial compensation may be given to teachers who are willing to teach virtually in addition to the in person instruction ,and that is great, but as a parent, I want to know that my child's educational opportunity will not suffer as a result of asking too much of our teachers. If "Plan B" is chosen, has TCS considered hiring teachers specifically to do the virtual teaching thus allowing the teachers already in our system to focus on the in-person instruction and giving both groups access to the same educational opportunity? If the school system opts for " Plan C" at least initially, that alleviates all parents from the difficult position you now find yourselves and perhaps allows the school system to retain all enrolled children which may dramatically impact the budget.

I understand that these decisions are difficult at best and ,regardless of what you decide, there will be folks who are happy and folks who are unhappy with that decision. As a parent, ultimately, I must make the decision for my own child's educational path. I must also consider the consequences of the health risks to my family that accompany that decision. We have had a very positive experience in the TCS to date and expect that to continue. Honestly, I do not yet know what I will decide if I am put in a position where making a decision becomes necessary. I appreciate your time and consideration of all the questions I have raised. We look forward to your decision on Monday and pray for your wisdom and divine guidance in making this decision as there is so much at stake. With gratitude, Amy

Amy Fisher

I wrote to you yesterday with several questions to consider as you decide the path forward for our schools. I have since learned that a teacher within our school system has tested positive and is very sick with COVID. She also has children in our school system. This is very scary and important information as you consider how even one positive case within our system could potentially impact the lives of many.

I have also given much more thought to my own family and to what choice we will make if Plan B is chosen. While doing so, I realized, our school system works hard everyday to give each child the same opportunity regardless of socio- economic backgrounds. The idea of returning to school in person but allowing parents to opt out creates an obvious divide along those lines. Families with the means to educate at home will likely make the choice to keep their kids home. Thus, the divide in economics also becomes the divide of the haves and have nots in the system.

With COVID numbers steadily rising in our county and young people being hit hard ( I know two right now very sick in their 30s - one works at TCS and they both have kids in the system), I encourage you to vote for Plan C. I know there are no easy answers and both have consequences. The risk of being a little behind at school is far less that that of the risk of exposing countless families to a potentially deadly virus.

We appreciate each of you and the work you do to ensure a safe, quality education for all. Our prayers are with you as you make these difficult decisions. Thank you for considering these points.

Amy Fisher

Dear Dr. Jeff McDaris,

Saying that we are living in unprecedented times is an understatement right now, and I think it casts a false light on the actual situation because our nation and world has, in fact, faced down terrible diseases previously. We know what to do: wear masks, wash our hands, stay at safe distances from others, and stay home whenever possible.

Reopening school for face-to-face learning will have catastrophic consequences. As of July 15, Transylvania Regional Hospital claims to have 92 hospital beds and no more than 6 ICU beds, with 6 ventilators at most. They cannot handle the influx of patients when these dark circumstances come to our county, and come to our county they will.

Almost  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Florida's school children have COVID. We know from the Israeli attempt at returning to school when they were having about 10 new daily cases ended up with 2,026 students and staff were confirmed infected and 28,000 were quarantined. We know 47% were infected in schools. Will we 100% reflect what happened there? Who knows, but the evidence certainly shows we will suffer by returning to face-to-face contact.

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How can we close schools when there are 1,000 cases but reopen when there are 90,000 cases in the state? How can we be asked to sacrifice our lives when we sacrifice so much already? How can the Board of Education hold virtual meetings with 7 people and we be asked to have in person classes with 15 or more?

We cannot keep kids from kissing in the hallway. We cannot keep kids from wearing inappropriate clothing. We cannot keep kids from touching one another on the playground. We cannot disinfect every classroom every period. We cannot control these issues during "normal" times. Healthcare workers are getting sick and dying, and they have training and equipment to avoid the sickness. How can we possibly have the same level of protection as them?

For all the aforementioned reasons, it is unconscionable for us to return to face-to-face instruction. We ask that we fully fund NCDHHS guidelines and metrics for returning to physical school and that we have a meaningful place at the table in discussions about returning to physical school.

In order to help us reach these goals, we are asking everyone who values our students, teachers, and community to sign our petition by going to [NCAE.org](https://www.ncae.org). Furthermore, we ask that you vote for Transylvania County Schools to return to school virtually, using plan C.

Sincerely,  
Sara Plum



Good afternoon Dr. McDaris and BOE members. I am contacting you to express my opinion as a teacher, husband, and father of two children in the school system, on the subject of school opening this fall.

After much deliberation, review of the recent data, reconciliation of my personal biases and views on the subject, and soliciting input from other stakeholders that I know and trust, it is my strong belief that the best thing for all involved with TCS, as well as our community at large, is to open under Option C, 100% virtual learning.

Option C provides the safest avenue for our students, teachers, and staff in our school buildings. From a physical health perspective, the simple fact of the matter is that no matter how diligent we are in adhering to masks, social distancing, cleaning and disinfecting, etc., it is a virtual certainty that at some point in the process, more than one person will contract the virus, and then spread it to who knows how many people. I am probably in the same boat as many, who are very healthy and free of underlying conditions, but who also lives with someone(s) with an underlying health risk. So yeah, I would probably get sick and be OK, but I live with a person that I love very much for whom that may not be the case. There is indeed a very good chance that the vast majority of our students would get the virus, recover, and be just fine, but our students encounter a lot of people for whom the virus could be debilitating and potentially fatal.

This leads me to my next point, which is the social/emotional impact that reopening at this juncture could lead to for the children and adults in TCS. Our students are already traumatized by school and sports/extracurriculars being shut down in March, not to mention living the terribly uncertain year of 2020, which has seen our country rocked by a pandemic, as well as cities and towns experiencing protests, and in some cases, looting and rioting. I would hate for the school system to add to this by them having to undergo the experience of each and every school day being essentially a game of Russian Roulette, constantly waiting to see if we made it through another week without anyone we are in the building with contracting the virus. Imagine the emotional impact on a classroom full of kids experiencing a favorite teacher getting sick and dying because they possibly contracted the coronavirus in school. My rising 4th grader would be heartbroken if one of his teachers or classmates got sick. And consider the impact it would have on a teacher if his or her classroom became a hotspot? I would constantly wrack my brain wondering if I had done enough to keep my students safe. I currently oversee our morning and afternoon workouts, during which time we see about 40 kids daily between between the two sessions, and we work EXCEEDINGLY hard to ensure that we are keeping our kids safe in an environment (outdoors, small groups, masks being worn, constant use of hand sanitizer and disinfectant spray) that is less conducive to viral spread than our classrooms and buildings will be, with everyone indoors, breathing the same recirculated air.

I mention this last, mostly because I am confident in myself and my colleagues will adapt to anything, but opening under Option C makes teaching and delivering instruction more consistent and manageable for all involved. We have been through the fiery trial of the last quarter of 2020, and I have no doubt we will be more equipped to handle 100% virtual learning

so much better than we were just a few short months ago. I believe this also makes it easier for parents to arrange childcare, rather than having to find it on alternating days. I know that this last is not our primary concern as a school system, but it is a practicality that must be addressed.

On a final personal note, let me say that I have had to reconcile this approach with my own personal feelings and biases. As the football coach, I understand that anything short of full school reopening is not promising when it comes to sports. After all, it presents inherent contradictions for us to tell our families and students that it is not safe enough to be in the building every day, but it is safe enough to come to practice every day, travel on a bus to other counties, etc. I also am a firm believer in the fact that the social/emotional impact of not being in the building is no light consideration. I am sad, and angry, and basically in mourning over this situation. I have two boys who were robbed of a quarter of school and sports, and this is my first year as the head football coach, a job that I have literally always wanted. But the fact remains, despite mine or anyone else's personal feelings, that it simply isn't safe enough to go back into the buildings at this point. This breaks my heart, but it is, I believe based on the data and risks, a fact. I firmly believe that the community at large, the folks who are quietly contemplating the situation, will not be ready to return to normalcy. Obviously that is out of the control of the school system, but what is in our control is what we do with our buildings and the people who inhabit them. For the safety of all involved, choose Option C.

I appreciate all the work that all of you do on behalf of our school system. Thank you for your time.

Dusty Robinson  
Head Football Coach  
Rosman High School  
English Language Arts & Social Studies  
Rosman Middle School

Please consider opening our schools with the Plan C option. Even with all of the guidelines, I do not feel that being inside with 10-12 kids would be safe for anyone. Even with a low fatality percentage, many survivors of COVID have irreparable damage to their health. The truth is that we do not know all of the future consequences of contracting this virus. Why are we willing to risk the health and safety of our students and our teachers? A lot has been said about how the virus affects children, but not the adults in the building. Does that mean the teachers and our families are expendable then? What is the magic number of positive cases and/or deaths before we end up closing schools again? Are we willing to risk that type of tremendous loss in our community? Not enough citizens in our community are taking this virus seriously, which will affect all of us enclosed in a classroom with their children. All of the sacrifices of the responsible members of our community over the last 4 months will be for nothing if we open schools right now. Virtual teaching last spring was far more difficult than teaching in person. It is not an easy solution for anyone, but it is the safest. I recognize that this is an extremely difficult situation but I hope that if we err, it is on the side of caution rather than convenience.

Thank you for your support and consideration,  
Deanna Campbell  
BES

Hello my name is Tara Watkins I have a son Caleb who will be a freshman this year he is terrified about coming back to school and he has asthma and is considered high risk. So will there be an learn strictly at home option for kids who are high risk and or scared to return to in person learning?

Tara Watkins

Dear Dr. McDaris,

In a perfect world, we would love to return to school in person in August. However, we are not living in a perfect world. Transylvania County continues to experience an increase in the number of COVID cases each day, and the weekly increase in cases is 74%. Three student-athletes at BHS have contracted the virus. Furthermore, roughly 25% of our schools' faculty are in the high-risk category. There are also high-risk students and their high-risk family members, like my son and me, that should be considered.

Because of this, I call upon you to delay the in-person reopening of schools until we can fully fund the implementation of the CDC and DHHS guidelines and until new cases of the virus have plateaued, if not dropped precipitously.

We want nothing more than for our children and community to heal and to overcome. Difficult times call for sacrifices, and while we sacrifice for these kids every single day, we are not willing to sacrifice our lives and those of our families and your families.

Please, vote to open schools virtually on plan C. Many other districts have already chosen to do the same, including Durham, Rockingham, Chapel Hill-Carrboro, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Orange, Thomasville City, and Warren.

Furthermore, we ask you to show your support of our students, staff, and community by signing the petition found at [NCAE – North Carolina Association of Educators | Our Schools, Our Safety, Our Say](#)

Or go to NCAE.org, click "Our Schools, Our Safety, our Say", scroll to the bottom of the screen, and sign the petition.

Respectfully,

Crystal Mortensen

Parent and PTO Vice President at Pisgah Forest Elementary