

## **Agenda item 8.1 – Superintendent Chief Learning Officer - District Update for the Board**

1) Tue, Jan 20, 2021 at 6:33 AM  
Charlene Desler

Good Evening- My name is Charlene Desler and I would like to start by thanking Carmen for her hard work.

I am an employee of TTUSD with 2 children in the district, a middle schooler and a high schooler. I understand that life is hard and challenging during this time. Both of my kids would prefer to be in school, playing football, seeing friends. But they both are old enough to understand the severity of the pandemic and the importance of safety. What I want everyone to know is that my children are NOT missing out on learning. They are learning in a different way. This is making them stronger and more capable to deal with situations out of their control.

I want to give a shout out to each of their teachers, Miss Steves, Miss Timmons, Mr. Nordby, Mr. Hansen, Miss Barker, Miss Ernst, Mr. Flesock, Miss Wilson, Miss Goss, Mr. Hinkle, Mr. Norbutas, Miss Meyer, Miss Arington. You are all doing an amazing job and working harder than ever. My kids are doing great because of you and I am grateful. Keep up the good work.

Thank you.

Charlene Desler

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2) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 10:51 AM  
Lauren Baker

Good Morning TTUSD leadership,

Today is a monumental day. A first of many. Kamala Harris will be the first female Vice President in U.S. history. So, I am urging you to carry this momentum into the TTUSD board meeting tonight when making decisions for our community and children.

Our children have been out of school for 10+ months without a concrete plan to get and keep them in the classroom. This is ONLY further widening the academic gap of our children; especially those most vulnerable - our daughters, our children of color, and our children from low socioeconomic background.

Our children have been patient long enough. They have done more than their part for the common good of decreasing the spread of this virus. However, we all know this pandemic is NOT two dimensional and much more complex. Our kids are being deeply affected for years to come - including but not limited to their mental health, college prospects, and earning potential!

It is time for action! Tonight, at the TTUSD board meeting I am asking our leadership to put our KIDS interests first and make a progressive plan to get our kids back in the classroom!

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from our leadership tonight.

Sincerely,

Lauren Baker  
Glenshire Elementary mother of three

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3) Tue, Jan 20, 2021 at 8:17 AM  
Helen Smith

I'm writing this is regards to reopening schools. I would hope you would look at the numbers and not personal opinions!! My cousin's husband just died yesterday from COVID-19 leaving her a widow with three children. This is a deadly pandemic, and we cannot wash it away!!no matter how much hand washing and mask wearing it's still possible to spread at a rapid rate!!a mutation is now on Californians mind!!schools across the nation are closed and their states have lower numbers than ours!!we all want our kids back when its safe and as of now it's not!!

Thank you,

Helen Smith

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4) Tue, Jan 20, 2021 at 9:25 AM  
Jonathan Moulton

Dear Board Members,

I find myself writing again as a very concerned parent and community member. Just like the rest of this community I want my two children back in school too. Though I am very impressed with the district's roll out of distance learning, I also know that children learn best while in school and need to be in school.

I know the board is excited because numbers of positive cases within our district might be down, but I also know that not all students and staff within the TTUSD district are reporting positive cases while on distant learning. We are so close to having vaccinations available to teachers, parents and caregivers, why not wait until at least the first round has been distributed if not the second round? We know that though we do not all like distance learning it is much better than

losing a community member, teacher or student to COVID-19. We have come this far, please do not rush and open the schools.

We are a strong community and though this is not ideal, we can pull off just another month or two of distance learning while we wait for teachers and other essential workers to receive their vaccinations.

Again, I urge you to please push the opening date back a bit more while our community waits for vaccinations.

Thank you very much for taking not only my children's safety into consideration, but also our entire community.

Jonathan Moulton

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5) Tue, Jan 20, 2021 at 8:41 AM  
Ben Shefftz

Hello, I'd like to submit the following comments and questions to the board for their consideration as you discuss reopening in the hybrid model.

- In the fall, the district transitioned to hybrid at a time when COVID-19 cases had been low, but public health officials uniformly anticipated that cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities would all increase rapidly with the onset of colder temperatures and more indoor activities. We did not last long in the hybrid model. Please consider the parallels between your decision in the fall and the decision you are making now, as more transmissible virus variants have been detected across the U.S. and in California, and the CDC warns these variants could drive huge spikes in the number of infections (1).

- I urge the board to consider emerging evidence that school-aged children can and do spread COVID-19 at significant rates, especially when community spread is high. While European countries have been a model for keeping schools open, increasing outbreaks have recently closed schools in the U.K., Germany, Ireland, Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands (2).

- The district's testing resources are available only to symptomatic or exposed students and staff, but there is evidence that a majority of cases may come from asymptomatic spread (3). Expanded testing of all staff and students will be necessary to curb cases.

- While the risk of masked classroom instruction can be considered low, unmasked, indoor snack or lunch time is a much higher risk. Can these activities be limited or eliminated to improve the safety of the hybrid model?

- Has the district considered gating reopening to vaccine availability for teachers and staff? Is there a date by which vaccination is expected to be offered to all teachers and staff?

- Have any instructional models been considered besides hybrid? For example, some school districts have provided proctored, onsite spaces for distance learning for children whose parents both need to work outside of the home, which would be safer than the hybrid model in many ways.

I appreciate the difficulty of your decision and your repeated emphasis on safety in your communications, but I'd like my comments to serve as a reminder that safety during this pandemic is relative, and not absolute. and that every severe illness or death in our community is one too many, especially with the promise of widespread vaccination only a few months away.

-Ben Shefftz  
Soda Springs  
Parent of 3 TTUSD children

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/15/health/covid-cdc-variant.html>
2. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/europes-schools-are-closing-again-on-concerns-they-spread-covid-19-11610805601>
3. <https://www.webmd.com/lung/news/20210110/59-percent-of-covid-cases-stem-from-asymptomatic-spread>

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6) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 8:25 AM  
Aaron Abraham

Hello Carmen, TUSD BOD, and teachers,

Thanks for your continued efforts to get the kids back to school. We have spent a lot of time researching and analyzing data of in-person learning as you have. We all agree that in-person learning is in the best interest of our kids, families, and the overall health of the community if we can do it safely. To come to a solution, we must take an objective look at our challenge.

There is no doubt that we are seeing a surge in COVID numbers across our County and State. However, there is no science or data that shows in-person learning is a platform for COVID transmission when done in a socially responsible way. This is reported and documented by the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, Anthony Fauci, and many leading scientists in our country and around the world. They realize that school provides a structured and supervised framework for students to gather. School districts across the nation are proof of this as they

conducted in-person learning this past fall. What additional information is our community looking for to understand this science and move forward with in-person learning?

It has now become very perplexing why we are not returning to school. We understand the challenges that TTUSD faced in the 3 weeks we returned to in-person learning in November. Shortage of staff, lack of substitutes, active cases, lack of daycare for staff, testing facilities, too many visitors, etc. But remember other districts faced these same challenges. From the rural to urban communities in our country, they all faced an array of obstacles that we face. These other districts overcame these tough challenges by promoting how essential teachers and in-person learning is in our communities. Remember. If there was truly a scientifically proven risk of students returning to school - we would know. The opening of these school districts has been closely monitored for the last 5 months to ensure the safety of the student, teacher, and community as a whole. Science, common sense and critical thinking were the focus - not politics. Let's do the same due diligence and ensure the safety of our students, teachers, and community are all respected while we transition into in-person learning!

Warm Regards,

Aaron, Karin and the 619 community members who signed the "Get the kids back to school" petition on [change.org](https://www.change.org)

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7) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 8:37 AM  
Nicole Roland

Dear members of the school board,

I write as a parent of 1 child in the district and 1 toddler at home. I write as a parent who chose to move to Truckee for their education both in the classroom and the wide variety of outdoor education that is provided within the adventurous surroundings, we live within. I share this because I want you to know that my recommendations are informed by research and data, not politics or personal preferences. Probably like most people, I want my children to return to school. Like many in our community, I lack the support to successfully homeschool or support my children in their online educations.

This past year (Come March) has been the toughest year for all of us in my home. I've witnessed a catastrophic decline in my child's abilities to learn, engage, socialize, and even communicate with me.

The virtual (at home) learning model has led to the loss of my income, the stress this has made on our family has been detrimental to all of us.

We suffer to come up with ways to stay on task with school, the google meets are less and less engaging for our child and the lack of enthusiasm with school as a whole is so disheartening We often hear the words: "I hate school" from our child who was beyond an excellent / well behaved student prior to the school closure.

We are so disappointed in our school board and our community officials who have allowed for the online learning model to go on for this long. The audacity to allow visitors and tourism continue to rampage our little town without allowing our students back into the classroom has shown us all where our elected officials priorities are.

I'm urging you to vote to have our students back in the classroom Full time / full days of the week Monday – Friday. With the social distance measures in place and safety measures our schools have made, I feel comfortable and confident we can and will be making the right choice.

Our children need to see their teachers and friends. They need to play, run, touch, hear and all other senses need to be aroused for them to learn A screen is not cutting it at all.

We are in the process of exploring other school districts because of our boards inability to get our kids back into the classroom.

We hope to stay residents within TTUSD boundaries, but our child's education is far more important.

Thank you for your time.

Nicole Roland

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8) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 10:28 AM  
Jacqueline Diaz

As the district considers permitting our kids to return to school, I urge you to open the schools **five** days a week. It is difficult to understand TTUSD's incredibly slow and tentative response to the COVID crisis, particularly compared to other districts locally and nationally. For example, the New York City Department of Education is responsible for more than 1,800 schools and was able to send their students back in full-time August. TTUSD, on the other hand, has nine schools and we have only managed to let our students go to school for six half days. Eight hours a week of in-person instruction for our students is insufficient. The safety risks we take sending our children back to school are minimal when compared to the long term affects that distance learning has and will continue to have on our students. Our community is going to grapple with the harsh realities of supporting our students both academically and emotionally as we recover from the past year. The longer we delay reintegration, the harder it will be to bring students back up to speed and the deeper the emotional stress will become – the "summer

slide” will pale in comparison. These setbacks not only affect the student’s daily well-being, but it will also result in unanticipated expenses and resources for which TTUSD has not prepared.

Our community is losing faith in the District. Families are moving out. It is hard to see our community "open back up" to visitors and "normal" business when our schools are still closed. The scales have tipped; in your efforts to slow the spread of the virus, scarier and more detrimental effects have presented themselves and it is time to fervently prioritize the wellbeing and education of our community’s children and families.

Concerned Parents,

Jacqueline (teacher) & Rob Anderson (firefighter)  
Working parents of two elementary-age students

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9) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 10:36 AM

Kristen Williams

Dear TTUSD School Board,

I am a parent of a second grader and kindergartener at SELS. I am also a school counselor employed at a public charter school for grades preschool-8 in Reno. The school I work at has successfully been open full time, five days a week since August. There are ways to safely re-open schools in Truckee. My children are suffering from missing out on in-person instruction and spending way too much time on screens. I regret not pulling my children out of TTUSD schools and having them enroll at the school I work at in Reno. We have to pay for day care for our school age children, putting a financial strain on our family.

Please re-open our schools!

Sincerely,  
Kristen Williams

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10) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 10:53 AM

Angela Auger

Dear Carmen Ghysles and TTUSD Board of Directors,

We have sent out a petition to parents and the Tahoe Truckee community to show You that there is significant interest in getting the student back in the classroom. The families that strongly urge our board to reopen schools have signed the petition. In one week, 638 signatures were gathered in support of getting the students back into the classroom. We wanted to share

this data with you and show you the petition that was created. The signatures on the petition include but are not limited to parents, students, medical professionals, and community members. Here is the petition for your review: <http://chnq.it/znxMy6QXSG>

Please read all comments left in the comments section of the above link to the petition. The 32 comments thus far are in favor of going back to classroom learning.

It is also understood that there are some parents and staff who do not support going back to in-person learning. TTUSD had already solved this issue by offering Cohort C.

The article in the petition supports that the secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in schools is extremely limited:

[https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2021/01/06/peds.2020-048090.full.pdf?fbclid=IwAR09c5r\\_OsUx\\_Uo-Ckpd4qQBQJVNKXw2pfiZ8XIIK7WcsYOq4BcM0yAbBaQ](https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2021/01/06/peds.2020-048090.full.pdf?fbclid=IwAR09c5r_OsUx_Uo-Ckpd4qQBQJVNKXw2pfiZ8XIIK7WcsYOq4BcM0yAbBaQ)

This same study stated that an estimated 3 million students across the United States have had no formal education since schools have been closed. The students being most affected by distance learning are the lower income, Black, Latino and students that are already falling behind. There are many students in the district that are severely suffering from distance learning.

We as a community and school district can work together to solve the roadblocks that keep us from in-person learning. Please consider reaching out to the community, parents, and medical professionals so we can help make this happen.

This petition was put together by two mothers of elementary school aged children who are suffering from learning through a screen and missing the social emotional interactions of their teachers and their peers. The petition also describes other students who are severely depressed from this form of learning. It was also stated above that the minorities and those most in need of in-person education are suffering most. We are both nurses at Tahoe Forest Hospital and would never put our kids, teachers or administrators in harm's way. The safety measures are in place now let's get these kids back to their desks.

We contacted 12 of the 16 school districts in Placer county (3 we could not reach) all of which are back to school 5 days a week or in a Hybrid model of learning. Seems like there are plenty of examples in our district on how to return safely.

The communication between the district and parents has lacked transparency and details. We ask that you communicate the needs of the district that will allow us to open schools, keep them open and what the plan is to get back into a regular school schedule.

TTUSD has **already taken the steps to create safe schools.**



We thank you for taking the time to read and respond to all the parents who participated in this petition. We look forward to answers and in-person learning moving from Hybrid to 5 days a week as quickly as possible.

Warm Regards,

Sonia Henry, Angela Gardner and the 638+ petitioners.

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11) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 11:24 AM

Nubbia Greninger

Good morning,

My name is Nubbia Greninger and I have a 7-year-old daughter who just joined Cohort C at Truckee Elementary School.

Even though we might choose not to send her back to in-person class, I think like many things in life the parents should have a choice to send their kids to school.

So, I think is important the schools open up on a safe basis.

Thank you for reading this.

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12) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 12:15 PM

Anonymous

ON JANUARY 6, 2021, I WATCHED THE TTUSD BOARD MEETING AND HEARD THE PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING GETTING STUDENTS BACK TO SCHOOL "IN-PERSON LEARNING VERSUS, VIRTUAL VERSUS, HYBRID".

AS WIFE, MOTHER, AND COMMUNITY MEMBER FOR THE MORE THAN 20 YEARS, I HAVE TO SAY I AM ASHAMED OF SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THIS COMMUNITY.

YES! WE ALL WANT TO GET CHILDREN BACK IN SCHOOL.

THE LAW REQUIRES THAT OUR CHILDREN BE EDUCATED. AS FAR AS I KNOW, THE LAW DOES NOT REQUIRE THE TAXPAYERS TO PROVIDE EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OR ORGANIZED SPORTS.

I REALIZE THAT WE ARE ALL BEING INCONVENIENCED BY SOMETHING OUT OF OUR CONTROL, BUT WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS, AND IT WILL TAKE TIME, PATIENCE, AND

CREATIVITY BY ALL OF US. WE CANNOT TAKE RISKS THAT WILL ENDANGER THE HEALTH OF THE COMMUNITY AND ESPECIALLY THOSE FOR WHOM THIS VIRUS COULD MEAN DEATH OR A LONG-TERM DISABILITY. WITH THE NEW STRAIN WE ARE MORE AT RISK THAN EVER.

BUT IN THE MEANTIME,

I WOULD URGE ALL OF US TO STOP BEATING ON THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE BOARD TO MAKE THIS LESS INCONVENIENT FOR US. THEIR JOB IS TO EDUCATE CHILDREN THE BEST THEY CAN UNDER DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES WHILE USING COMMON SENSE TO PROTECT THE TEACHERS, STAFF, AND FAMILIES.

OUR JOB AS PARENTS IS TO RAISE OUR CHILDREN, IT IS NOT THE TAXPAYERS JOB.

WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN SOME VALUABLE LESSONS. **MINIMALIZING AND COMPLAINING ABOUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO PROTECT OUR STUDENTS, TEACHERS, STAFF, AND COMMUNITY IS NOT HELPFUL.**

IF WE FEEL WE MUST "SOCIALIZE" THE CHILDREN OR PROVIDE ACTIVITIES, THEN TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AS PARENTS AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT YOURSELF.

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13) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 12:35 PM  
Veronica Watson

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well.

I am a mother of 2 and am homeschooling my 1st grade son. I strongly feel the schools need to open back up ASAP. My son and I don't have the same relationship anymore. It is literally causing so much stress in our home. The weight I have on my shoulders as a wife, a caretaker and homeschool teacher it too much. I am mentally exhausted. I believe us mothers have too much on our plates already. Our children need socialization and professional teachers.

If the schools don't open, our children will be bused and shuttled to many places for childcare. We are hiring babysitters and tutors. How is this more safe than opening school?

How is more exposure to many different resources and help more safe than having them all in one place with the same group?

Open the schools.

Thank you for listening.

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14) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 12:41 PM

PAUL NAVABPOUR

A few questions/comments for today's meeting:

- Last meeting, board's directive was that schools can't reopen yet as cases are still high "with ski resorts being open and so many out-of-town visitors here".
- Has the district thought about petitioning to the governor to put kid's needs first? Our community has now been out of school and not school sports for a year minus the 2-4 days it was reopened.
- Yesterday's Teen Substance Abuse Zoom meeting clearly showed that drug use has increased since the closure of schools. This is primarily due to kids being out of school, no programs to keep them engaged, etc. Clearly, we are seeing a bad trend here that will hurt this community for years to come; perhaps another reason for allowing kids to get back to school safely. Other communities and countries have put the needs of their kids first.

Thank you,  
Paul Navabpour

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15) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 1:32 PM

Becky Jackson-Rivard

Hello -

My daughter is in 3rd grade at Glenshire Elementary. I would like to implore the board and the district vote to return to school full time.

Her teacher has done an incredible job teaching virtually but I know that she would benefit so much by returning to in-person learning. The hybrid model for her was basically taking a step back. She had less learning and less teacher interaction with the hybrid model than she did with 100% virtual. It is too much pressure to put on working parents to have them be the teacher solo 2 days a week.

Grass Valley Charter was able to go back 5 days a week by doing AM and PM cohorts. Why can't TTUSD look into this? Or better yet skip hybrid and go back full time.

I realize that you have a lot of factors to consider and appreciate you taking the time to read this comment.

Best Regards,

Becky

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16) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 1:51 PM

Heather Williams

Good afternoon,

Writing in regard to students resuming (or not resuming) school.

I certainly think safety is important for students and staff. I work as a nurse consultant for a nursing home chain, so I'm definitely not the person that thinks the pandemic isn't a concern or that it shouldn't be taken seriously.

However, I also think that school is an essential part of our kids' lives and that the safety measures in place for masks and distancing should allow them to return to in-person school with minimal risk.

My kids are learning okay virtually, because my spouse and I have the good fortune to be able to work remotely right now. But it's far from ideal. We can't always put our work aside to help them, we have 2 different grades and 4 people's schedules and the kids are lonely and sick of staring at screens. They're more easily distracted and don't do their best work. Many families aren't that lucky and aren't able to help at all and/or are relying on childcare options that are less safe than in-person school would be.

Vaccines are being administered, cases and hospitalizations are dropping.

I am comfortable with kids returning to the hybrid model. It's also not ideal but at least provides some normalcy and some relief for parents while still being a safe option.

I know staffing and testing were issues that hopefully have been resolved.

Thank you,

Heather Williams

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17) **DO NOT READ – AUDIO ALSO**

Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 2:53 PM

GUDRUN DYBDAL

Public Comment for TTUSD Board of Education Trustees Study Session, January 20, 2021, agenda item 8.0 Superintendent's Report. Submitted by Gudrun Dybdal, a Truckee resident.

Thank you to the TTUSD leadership as you plan and prepare for a safe and sustainable re-opening of our schools.

Yesterday, January 19, 2021, the CA Safe and Successful Schools Team Lead, Naomi S. Bardach, MD, MAS, California Health and Human Services Agency issued a letter to Local Health Officers and County Superintendents of Schools, RE: Safe Schools for All Plan and Key Near-Term Issues Regarding School Reopenings. She wrote on behalf of the team, to introduce the team and to highlight a few key issues they have heard regarding schools that are currently open or plan to reopen in the coming weeks. The update reflects the most current evidence and science about operating schools in-person in a way that keeps students and staff safe. The letter includes clarifications on school re-opening. "If the county is in Purple Tier on the day the school plans to reopen for in-person instruction, the school must wait until eligible again."

Please see the link below to access the letter.

How will the letter addressing key near-term issues impact and influence the TTUSD reopening plans?

I remain concerned that children are often asymptomatic but are capable of unknowingly spreading virus. What plans are in process to provide Covid19 vaccines for teachers and school staffs?

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Schools-Reopening-Letter.pdf>

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18) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 3:12 PM  
Joanna Close, TTUSD parent and spouse

To the TTUSD leadership, school board, and Tahoe-Truckee community:

I am the parent of a TTUSD 3rd grader and spouse of a teacher. I think we can agree on one thing - we all want our students back in school; we all understand the benefits of in-person learning. However, decisions during these unprecedented times must be made only after careful consideration of the myriad risks and benefits to students, families, staff, and the community at large.

I started this letter to urge you to hold off on returning teachers and students to in-person learning at this time. To wait for the community COVID rates to reflect a decline and then sustained leveling; to wait for more information about the new, more transmissible variants; to wait for vaccinations for teachers/staff, as well as for community members at increased risk of COVID complications, particularly those living in inter-generational homes.

But as I write this, I find myself, instead, with urgent pleas for more information, transparency, and accountability.

The communication from Superintendent Ghysels has been regular, however, it has lacked concrete information. Her recent messages have left me with more questions than answers, more concerns than comforts. Ghysels presents with a myopic focus on returning students to the classroom, with a tone-deafness to the diversity of wishes and comfort levels of the community as a whole.

Ghysels has repeatedly stated that the district is using “safety as a guiding principle,” however, does not define “safety” in the context of the COVID pandemic. What SPECIFIC CRITERIA is the district using to decide whether or not to return our staff and students to the classroom? For example, what community case rates are deemed “safe”? Based on the metrics shared on January 7, the Placer County 7-day case rates were at 5 per 100,000 when schools entered hybrid in October. In November, when we pivoted back to remote learning, the rates were 18.6 per 100,000. As of January 12th, the rates were 49.2 per 100,000. That is a near 10-fold increase. And what about test positivity rates? Although this has been a common metric reported in other regions and used for decision making, I have not seen that reflected locally.

Ghysels reported on January 14 that today’s school board meeting will “review the latest COVID data to evaluate feasibility of safely reopening in hybrid.” I implore you to make transparent the SPECIFIC COVID DATA by which you deem it feasible to “safely reopen in hybrid.” I understand there are many variables at play here, and it is the public’s right to know the measures by which you are making important decisions - what percentage of staff can be under quarantine while the district continues operations such as classroom learning, transportation, food services, etc.? What are the metrics by which the district considers itself to have access to timely COVID testing? What about the differences between elementary and middle/high schools? While elementary classrooms can easily be segregated, thus making contact tracing and quarantining relatively easy - middle and high schools do not have the same luxury. **Teachers there are exposed to significantly more students each day, and the students themselves gather in several different groups throughout a school day. In the event of isolated illnesses and exposures, how will the district manage closures and quarantines at the middle and high school levels?**

**Will the district be using their dashboard to make decisions about returning to the classroom? This metric is unreliable by nature of it essentially being a self-report measure; there are myriad reasons that families would not report a positive COVID case - lack of awareness and understanding, or motives such as remaining in school or continuing to play basketball. I am aware of at least a few cases that have not been reflected in the dashboard. I urge the district NOT to use this metric when considering whether or not to return to or remain in in-person learning, by and large ignoring the importance of larger community rates. The current research purporting the safety of in-person schooling always includes a statement about “when community rates are low.”**

Ultimately, we need the district to clarify and specify the metrics used in decision-making. This information should be guided by the most current science, at the recommendation of public health experts, and through specific data that is easily accessed by the public.

Lastly, I would ask that the district leadership and school board better model both accountability and collectivism and implore the community to do so as well. I was disappointed that the superintendent repeatedly faulted “the huge influx of visitors” (verbally and in writing) for the increase in community infection rates. Meanwhile, I was aware of many local residents traveling both locally and out of state during the region’s stay at home order. In the current crisis, we cannot simultaneously travel for fun, dine out, gather socially, AND have our students and teachers safely return to school. What a time to teach our children to value community (and thus public health) over individualism (and selfish desires)! But without dismissing the very real trauma and grief that everyone is experiencing.

And while I certainly “want” students, and particularly my daughter, to return to the classroom, I do not necessarily agree that it is safe nor appropriate under the current conditions. But only we, as a community, can make a difference on that front. Everyone (or, almost everyone) needs to get on the same page in terms of mostly staying home, wearing masks around all non-household folks, keeping distance, and getting the vaccine when it is made available.

Thank you for your time,

Joanna Close

TTUSD parent and spouse

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19) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 3:13 PM

Chris Close

As the mother of a teacher and the grandmother of a student, I am very concerned with the “issue” of schools being open or not during this pandemic crisis. As a retired teacher I’m well aware of the benefit of students being in school, and of the fact that some students will do much better than others in an online environment. However, I also believe that the moving back and forth between online learning and some form of in-person learning is extremely disruptive.

When the schools briefly opened in the fall, it seemed apparent that keeping up with the challenge of testing students and staff, and dealing with the quarantines required when staff were exposed, was not sustainable.

I monitor the cases in the area daily. The district website doesn’t reflect what I see there, which is a steady stream of new cases. The cases per 100,000 and the positivity rate has had both Placer and Nevada counties in the purple tier for quite a while now and there’s a long way to go to change that.

Finally, with vaccines starting to become available, the idea that district would even consider moving to any form of in-person instruction seems unfathomable and irresponsible. The district personnel need the opportunity to access this protection. This is a community problem. The community needs to work together to get the case rates low enough that having schools open isn't going to cause a spiraling up of cases that will affect us all.

I urge you to maintain the current status-quo of online learning. Give the community time to get vaccinated, and for the case rates to come down. With case rates as high as they are, we need to each do our part to get them down before we create opportunities to continue the surge we are currently in the midst of.

Chris Close

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20) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 5:04 PM  
Jennifer Standteiner

I'm sorry to make the same claims each week, but I cannot stress enough the importance of our children's return to the classroom.

Teachers aren't teaching in a classroom of the same 12 students each day or even two days a week separated by plexiglass, socially distanced, in masks, but instead they are traveling on airplanes, on road trips, skiing Squaw, getting their nails done in Reno. I'm sorry but if they are so worried about the highly controlled, very safe environment of the classroom, then why are they engaging in activities outside of that environment that are so much less safe and healthy?

Now it seems they are standing in line to be some of the first for the vaccine, but I thought essential workers were the first on the list and as far as I've been told throughout this entire ordeal, teachers aren't considered essential. The teacher's union doesn't act like they are essential and continues to protect them at the cost of our children's social, emotional and physical development as well as their academic success for years to come. Yet our students continue to experience the lowest rate of infection of all demographics since the pandemic began. They are much safer to be around than those other 200 strangers at Costco in Nevada.

There were comments made at the last BOD meeting that "our kids will catch up" and "they'll be fine." Those comments are completely irrational and ungrounded. These kids are not fine right now. They are not on track right now. In fact, our local middle and elementary schools are "adjusting" standards to meet the low achievement of skills and knowledge of our students who have been without a classroom since last March. The faculty and staff at those school sites in the TTUSD are coming to terms with the fact that our children aren't learning what they should be or need to. They aren't learning enough to meet the current standards from this distance



learning model. They aren't learning "different things" because they are learning very little. Why can't our BOD see those facts?

We need a student union who can advocate for the students as strongly as the teachers union advocates for them! I thought the BOD was that body, but evidently that is not the case. I have learned a lot about our district since this struggle began. I'm disappointed. I thought we were better than this.

Jennifer Standteiner

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21) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 5:18 PM  
Erica Stukey Allstadt

Having had COVID-19, which I contracted while at school, wearing a mask, I have a new understanding of the disease. My young son also contracted it from me. Kids can get it, and yes, they do have symptoms which are very scary. I'd hate to have to watch another parent see their child sick.

That said, President Biden had a Press Conference today with his new press secretary. She was asked a question about Pres. Biden's recommendation on schools reopening. The press secretary responded by saying that the President will be rolling out a recommendation based on percentages of teachers vaccinated prior to teachers returning to school. Will the district be following, watching, listening to these new recommendations or continue to push forward with plans?

Thank you.

Erica Allstadt

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22) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 5:21 PM Jessica Catt

Dear Superintendent Ghysels and our TTUSD school board members,

We all know and understand that this is an incredibly challenging and unprecedented time for our community, including the parents, students, and staff in our district. I'm constantly listening and following to health officials and mandates, educating myself about the pandemic, and specifically schools reopening safely. There is now ample data to show that elementary school transmission is low, and it is time to reopen our schools and follow the agreed-upon protocols. The Superintendent, school board, administration, and the teachers union, have all worked so hard to put the measures and precautions in place.

I have listened to each board meeting since August, but outside the brief information delivered at these meetings, there has been a communication failure. There is a lack of detailed metrics and data provided in writing to explain Superintendent Ghysels decision-making process, as well as limited information on our COVID-19 dashboard, especially in comparison to neighboring Washoe County School District.

Regular surveys need to be sent out to understand our community needs and priorities, including questions on transportation and childcare, instead of making assumptions. Town hall meetings need to be scheduled.

Additionally, there has to be a change in the school board meeting public comment section. Our comments are simply read or listened to during this time. Why are our comments not directly responded to and/or answered? Sometimes, the answers to comments have already been presented and do not need further discussion, but the lack of dialogue, as well as direct response and acknowledgment is frustrating.

Finally, when will the public discussion begin about reopening our schools to five days/week? This question was asked multiple times at the previous board meeting and there has been no information in district communications. What is the protocol for taking this next step? I hope a detailed answer is provided soon. And I sincerely hope our schools reopen next week.

Kind Regards

-Jessica Catt, parent of Tahoe Lake Elementary 2<sup>nd</sup> grader

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23) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 5:25 PM Seoni Llanes

Dear superintendent, board, and ttusd staff,

We would like schools to open for our children's mental health. We understand the staffing shortage and the seriousness of COVID. We feel the district did a terrific job with covid safety measures and we would choose that risk over deepening mental health issues for the children.

Sincerely,

Seoni Llanes, mom to 2 ttusd students

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24) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 5:33 PM

Yvonne Logan

Dear School Board Members and Superintendent Ghysels. Thank you for your service to our community. I found out today that our School Board wrote to Governor Newsom about Placer County's vaccine distribution, or lack thereof, on behalf of our District staff. I appreciate your effort so much, although it seems at this time that it has fallen upon deaf ears. I want to urge

you to continue to advocate for our district's staff vaccines in order to keep everyone safe. I truly believe that this is the only way we will be able to keep schools open once we return.

At this time, I do not believe that it is safe to return to in-person learning. One reason is that the reporting of cases to the district is not being done faithfully. The numbers on which you are basing your reopening criteria are not accurate. Another reason is that the quarantine protocols in place for students and staff are not stringent enough. For example, if a member of a household has tested positive for Covid, other members of the household are free to return to school. This is unacceptable. As I mentioned in my last communication, I have yet to be offered regular testing for Covid, which I believe should be a bare minimum considering vaccines are not yet on the table.

Finally, I would like to see the district planning for the vaccine's rollout to our staff so that it can be conducted in an orderly and safe manner.

Thank you for your attentive ears,

*Yvonne Logan*  
*TWBI TK Teacher*  
*Kings Beach Elementary*

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25) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 6:43 PM  
David Steakley

Public comment from the Tahoe Truckee Education Association

We watched the school board meeting tonight just as you did and were surprised to find out TTUSD and the school board has decided to reopen for hybrid a week and a half from now on Feb 1st. TTEA was not consulted or notified ahead of time about this decision.

At previous school board meetings dealing with reopening TTUSD staff presented a local COVID data snapshot, which did not happen tonight. The previous school board meeting mentioned that metrics and public health guidance would be used to decide when to reopen. So, we thought it was important for you to have complete information as we talk about this very important issue. Today's Placer County 7 day average case rate was 41.5 per 100k people and a positivity rate of over 10%

(<https://www.placer.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/46267/dashboard?bidId=#case-rate-and-testing-data>). This is dramatically higher than the 7 cases/100k required for reopening in the fall and also in excess of the 28 cases per 100k required for reopening schools that had not yet reopened to reopen based on the Jan 14th "Safe Schools For All" plan released by Governor Newsom. We are over double the case rate of the most permissive published statewide public health guidance provided for safe reopening. According to this guidance schools that have not reopened previously are not eligible to reopen for in-person instruction above 28 cases per

100k. Why should the fact that we opened previously suddenly negate this public health guidance?

We understand everyone is tired of this pandemic. It is inconvenient. It is exhausting for everyone, particularly the parents of children. We know teachers are exhausted as well. But, this virus is insidious and doesn't care that we are tired of it. It infects and sickens people throughout our community regardless. Many of you know friends, students, parents, and staff who have been infected, and some who have unfortunately passed. The high levels of community transmission combined with the presence of a more transmissible variant becoming common in CA is not the time to ignore thoroughly researched public health guidance and reopen schools. TTEA Members (by and large) are ready to line up and receive the vaccine so that they can safely work with the students they love, but the vaccines aren't ready yet (despite how hard the Board and Chief Learning Officer Ghysles has been working on it).

The TTEA position is that TTUSD should not reopen for in-person instruction until we are under 28cases/100k day as an average daily case rate (as recommended by Governor Newsom). We must use specific, reasonable, transparent, metrics supported by well researched public health guidance, not personal intuition, anecdotes, and personal desires from those who are not public health experts.

We all understand that in-person school is better than distance learning. Everyone would prefer to be back in school with their students. But right now we feel under these conditions it isn't safe to do so. The TTEA surveys given over the past week overwhelmingly support this idea. Also, we feel that all families should be polled before moving forward. Currently, we are only hearing the voices of those who have signed petitions or submitted public comment.

We must continue to uphold the moral stance, be patient, and stand up for our health and the health of our students and the community.

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26) Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 6:44 PM  
Stacy Rodarte

Dear Community,

In school, we teach children about empathy; what it is, how to have it and how to show it. The simplest definition is to put yourself in someone else's shoes and to think and feel what it would be like to be in their situation. Have you thought about the school secretary and her situation, her family, her health? Have you thought about the cafeteria worker? How about the bus driver? What about the teacher that is a new mother? How about the teacher who lost his father to Covid recently? I can guarantee you, every single person that works for our schools works there because they LOVE children. More than anyone in this world, they know what children need socially, emotionally, and academically. And I can also guarantee that every single one of those

people has a broken heart from not seeing the children, hearing their voices, and interacting with them every day.

As a mother of three, my heart breaks. But I must take this opportunity to teach them that sometimes life is really hard. Our circumstances cannot be our foundation; we need to be who we are regardless of our situation. What we think and what we feel is real. The disappointment is real. The frustration is real. The emptiness is real. When we validate how we feel, then step outside and put ourselves in someone else's shoes, sometimes it helps. We can see that we are not alone in this struggle, we can see that others may have even harder situations, and we can also still experience joy, knowing some other kids, somewhere else, get to go to school every day, get to play their sports, and get to experience life the way it used to be. We can find hope in others. Having empathy doesn't always mean putting ourselves in the shoes of someone that is struggling. Having empathy also means finding joy for others that are experiencing better days.

Teaching our children perspective, in good times and in bad, is a beautiful life lesson. It is a lesson that's hard to teach when everything is right in this world. Let's take these opportunities to teach our kids true empathy, true perspective. It is our role as the adults in this country, this state, and this area to have a growth mindset and to lead by example. Our children are watching. My hope and prayer is that when we come out the other side of this, I can be proud of the growth that I have made as a human. I can look back and reflect at the deep and rooted humans my children have become. It hasn't been and it won't be easy as we continue down this unsettled and uncertain path, but really life never is.

My husband and I both teach for TTUSD. Our three children have always been TTUSD students. We wholeheartedly support our School Board and our Superintendent, Carmen Ghysels. We may not always agree with every decision, but we do know every single one of those leaders loves children, loves people, and loves serving our communities. They are tasked with making decisions taking into account every stakeholder, every dynamic, and every possibility. Let's teach our children to respect those around us, whether we agree with them or not. Let's teach them to have empathy for others, whether it feels good or not. Let's teach our children and ourselves to step back and take a look at things from a new perspective. We can and will persevere.

Thank you,

Stacey Rodarte  
Mother and TTUSD Teacher