



July 14, 2020

TO: Members of the Queen Anne's County Board of Education

FR: Karen Fields, President, Queen Anne's County Education Association

RE: Reopening

As NEA president, Lily Eskelsen Garcia states, "There's no one that wants our kids back more than teachers..but we want to open safely" Human Resources sent out a simple survey in June asking teachers if they were comfortable returning to their buildings. There is not a simple answer to this question without a thorough understanding of the health and safety procedures that will be in place to protect students, teachers and staff. The health of our schools will reverberate throughout our community.

Section 140 of our contract addresses health and safety,"The Board agrees that it shall maintain safe, sanitary, healthful working conditions and shall comply with related state and federal regulations. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall determine when a location is a health or safety hazard. Should an employee feel that a safety problem exists, he/she should report it immediately to his/her immediate supervisor. An inspection will be made as soon as practicable. The Board shall provide and the employees shall use all necessary and applicable safety equipment and personal protective equipment." This most serious responsibility weighs heavily on the Queen Anne's County Education Association and the Queen Anne's County Board of Education.

As we have learned at great cost, reopening plans that ignore or downplay the advice of scientists and public health experts can backfire. Keeping students and staff safe has nothing to do with politics and everything to do with the safety and the well being of our staff, students and their families.

Attached you will find the concerns and uncertainties that must be addressed before teachers can reply with confidence to the HR survey.



- Will HVAC/air quality specialists be brought into each to assess the air quality and check for proper ventilation? Older schools are prone to air quality issues and Covid-19 is said to spread in poorly ventilated areas. Will these HVAC/air quality reports be shared with parents and staff?
 - Are filters being changed in HVAC systems at the appropriate times?
 - Will classroom doors remain open and how will that affect security (ie. Lockdown drills)?
 - Will filters in ventilation systems be upgraded to the most advanced type for filtering particles?
 - How can staff be assured that maximum air exchange is occurring between outdoor and indoor air?
 - How will students, teachers, and staff be protected from becoming ill? (Specific protection protocols)
 - Will the temperatures of each student and each staff member be taken before entering the building each day? How will we accommodate this process with meeting requirements for learning time?
 - Will students and staff be required to wear masks? Will these masks be provided by the county? Or do they have to follow certain guidelines with which type of mask is to be worn?
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- What PPE will we, as classroom teachers, be provided?
 - What PPE will the students be provided? (Particularly our economically disadvantaged students who have a very difficult time obtaining even basic school supplies on a normal basis)
 - What will be the protocol for dealing with parents who refuse to send their child to school in a mask and/or students who refuse to wear a mask?
 - If a student in my classroom becomes ill with CoVid 19, will I be required to quarantine for 14 days? Will this time at home be reflected in my sick leave? If a teacher does not have sick time left, will they be forced to quarantine without pay?
 - If a student in my class becomes ill with Covid 19, will the entire class be required to quarantine as well? Will learning occur virtually during this time or will it cease? Will sub plans need to be provided?
 - If a student in my classroom tests positive for CoVid 19 and I am made to quarantine due to exposure, will my own children's classmates and teachers have to quarantine as well, as they have been exposed due to my exposure? How will this domino effect be addressed?
 - If a student comes to school sick, who will be responsible for contacting their family?
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- What specific cleaning protocols will be in place before, during, and after school hours? Who will be responsible for making sure that proper cleaning methods are used? (summer school teachers are now being held responsible for the cleaning process themselves.)
 - If a student is sent home due to a fever/symptoms, how will we be certain that they've gotten tested for Covid 19 before returning to school? Who will be responsible for following up with families? Tracing the cases?
 - What will happen to sick children who are already at school for the day when their family has no transportation to pick them up?
 - How many students will be allowed in a classroom? How will the selection of which students are virtual and which are in attendance be selected?
 - How will we ensure that students and staff stay socially distant? Will children be permitted to play with each other at recess? Can teachers eat together in faculty rooms?
 - Will students be permitted to share classroom supplies?
 - How will planning be accommodated if students do not leave the classroom?
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- What will happen if a teacher can't or is not willing to go back to school because of their medical issues or ones of their family? Will they lose their job?
 - Likewise, if a student wakes up with a cough, stuffy nose, sore throat, how long will they need to be home? Students sometimes come to school with symptoms because of lack of daycare. Not everyone who gets the virus runs a fever, so temp checks at the door in the morning won't catch everyone who is sick.
 - Will all staff and students have access to virus testing? How will parents be notified if there is a positive person in the building?
 - Teachers often go to work with colds and lingering coughs, especially due to the substitute shortage. Splitting kids up or having teachers cover for one another became common practice-how will this be handled now?
 - In a blended method of teaching, will teachers have the option to work from home or the classroom?
 - What if a parent chooses not to send their child back to the classroom environment? Or makes this choice at the beginning of the school year, but then wants to re-enter the classroom later in the year? How will staffing impact as a result of both of these possibilities be handled?
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- How will bathroom breaks, recess, specials be conducted?
 - Can the students have their own cleaning materials for personal use in the classroom?
 - Will hand washing be done on a regular basis throughout the day or only at certain scheduled times during the day?
 - How is busing going to be handled?
 - Who is responsible for disinfecting the room, especially common areas the class uses on a regular basis?
 - What does the actual day look like?
 - Will additional planning time be available if we are required to conduct a blend of virtual and in person instruction, since we will be planning for two separate scenarios?
 - How will teachers with underlying health conditions be utilized during this period?
 - If schools reopen on a hybrid schedule will QACPS support childcare for those teachers returning to school?
 - When will we get a definitive answer so we as teachers can figure things out and make plans?
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Questions relevant for Early Childhood and/or Special Needs:

- What is the plan for children who can't or won't keep a mask on? When a mask is contaminated will replacements be readily available? A major sneeze fills up the mask.
- What type of instruction is planned and/or expected for children (Prek) who have to have hands on learning with materials and are not ready for paper pencil tasks? No centers? How will this be evaluated?
- What is the plan for cleaning the classrooms for children who have not developed strong hygiene practices including but not limited to needing assistance with the restroom?