

This letter was written and signed by 78 Prek-2 Classroom Teachers and 53 Specialist Teachers working in Early Childhood in Brookline's Public Schools.

Dear School Committee members:

Thank you for your time and effort on behalf of the Public Schools of Brookline, its families, and children. As career early childhood educators, who have committed our professional lives to these schools and children, we are writing to address our serious concerns about re-opening our schools prematurely.

Teaching is our passion. Engaging young children, supporting their personal and social development, and teaching them to love learning is our life's work. We respectfully ask that you keep this truth in mind as we voice our concerns.

As we follow community conversations about starting the coming school year with all PK-2 students in school five days per week, we feel that we need to add our perspective as early childhood educators. While we understand the good intentions behind recommending a return to buildings for our youngest students, we must also acknowledge the insurmountable limitations this plan puts forth.

We know young children learn through play and interaction. They learn through literal hand-holding as we learn to count objects, learn to hold a pencil, and learn to read. Young children have 10-20 minute attention spans and require constant movement and change of environment to stay engaged. They thrive during small-group, targeted instruction. They require physical support through tying shoes, buttoning pants, washing hands, and wiping tears. They

benefit from emotional support (most often shown through hugs and close proximity to safe adults) as they navigate many first-time experiences. With the current DESE recommendations in place, none of these supports will be possible with in-person learning. Students will be asked to remain in their own space for the duration of the school day, six feet apart from their teacher and peers at all times. We hope you will take a moment to imagine an early childhood classroom void of these best practices: small group instruction will not happen, emotional and physical support will be severely limited, and teachers will be unable to confer with students at their tables, or facilitate partner and group projects.

Our expertise tells us that pushing our youngest students back into buildings neither supports their emotional well-being nor their learning in a meaningful way. We need to carefully consider the long-term detrimental effects of sending children into a school environment that has been stripped bare of the most impactful aspects of an early childhood experience. When a student is continuously redirected away from physical contact or close proximity to teachers and peers, and are asked to remain isolated, we risk decimating their emotional well-being at the expense of their physical health. We will transform a previously safe and welcoming space into one dominated by fear. While we recognize the struggle to find adequate childcare for working families, this is not a strong enough reason to place the lives of students and educators at risk.

There is simply not enough data to support the safe return to school buildings. New reports come out daily that change our understanding of how this virus spreads, who is affected, and possible long term effects. The state has not released airflow benchmarks or transmission rate data to guide our attempts to

reopen. This is a novel virus, and we do not have enough information or data to support risking human life for in-person learning.

There has not been nearly enough specific information provided around safety precautions. Even if airflow benchmarks are set and guaranteed, what fail-safes are being put in place if they malfunction? What level of PPE will be provided to teachers and staff? Will PPE be provided to students in need as well? What testing, contact tracing, and health mitigation protocols will be in place? Will the district put a necessary mask requirement in place for our youngest learners? What about teachers in open classrooms, such as Pierce, or those whose classrooms are in basements, closets, or lack windows?

The temperatures climb in many classrooms during September and October, and we are reliant on fans as most classrooms are not equipped with air conditioning. What will be put in place to combat this that doesn't involve pushing air around our classrooms? We also know from experience that our students will struggle to focus on learning by moving our regular instruction outdoors, tented or not, in the 90+ degree heat that punctuates our return to school in September. Further, can you guarantee every child and staff member who is outdoors, the physical safety that a securely locked building offers?

What protocols will be put into place to support students' emotional health when a classmate or teacher becomes seriously ill? How will we ensure that students are not left with overwhelming, and potentially life-long, feelings of guilt should a member of their classroom community become gravely ill or die? Should an educator become ill and unable to return to their classrooms for an extended period of time, who will be responsible for providing emotional support and academic instruction?

Will educators be expected to submit sub plans for the duration of their absence as they are during a typical school year?

There are also financial concerns that have not been addressed and which impact our ability to return to school as safely as possible. In the spring, the town shared its dire financial situation, resulting in budget cuts and layoffs across departments. Given these financial constraints, how will Brookline fund the near doubling of our PK-2 staff to support the plan for smaller cohorts? How will Brookline fund necessary furniture adjustments to allow for social distancing in our PK-2 classrooms? How will Brookline fund the retro-fitting of classroom spaces and HVAC systems to meet the air quality requirements to protect our teachers, staff, and students? How will Brookline fund the purchasing of additional materials, since our students can no longer share them? If money could not be found to guarantee the employment of our colleagues, where is it coming from now?

Teachers are problem-solvers. We have made a career of frequently doing more with less. Rolling up our sleeves and finding solutions is what we do every day. However, when our lives, the lives of our students and colleagues, and the lives of our loved ones are in question, we need to focus our problem-solving skills on the safest option.

We have recently seen discussions implying that remote learning will be a replica of what took place this past spring. Even worse, that it was a failure brought in some cases by lack of effort on the part of teachers. This past spring was NOT remote learning; it was crisis learning. Teachers were sent home with no access to supplies, materials, books, curriculum, or technology beyond what they already had in their home. We were asked to reimagine our

teaching overnight, with almost no support, and it was a task that every single educator showed up for. Most of us worked longer and harder than we ever have in our careers, while simultaneously navigating this pandemic and trying to keep our own families safe.

If given the time, which is quickly running out, we could use our creativity and problem-solving skills to rethink and restructure our curriculum. We could participate in professional development opportunities to learn new platforms to maximize student engagement. We could develop schedules that would allow for more personalized learning opportunities for students to ensure they feel connected. We could develop a social-emotional curriculum specific to remote learning alongside our counselors and school psychologists. There is so much potential, and we want nothing more than to get this right for our students!

Unfortunately, time is not on our side. Even if our district can miraculously get all of the safety requirements in place to make returning to the school buildings possible, we know that we will be forced into remote learning at some point in the upcoming months. Given recent reports from districts around the country, it's quite likely that it will be sooner than later. Understanding this reality, it is our position that we should be using this time now to plan for an effective and inclusive remote learning experience. We deserve sufficient training and preparation time for faculty and staff. Even the valuable ten days that we have received from DESE is not enough.

We understand that no model is ideal. There are downsides to ALL of them, and we feel each of them deeply. There is, however, one plan that ensures the SAFETY of teachers, staff, students, and families, and that is the one we urge you to push forward. It is a hard, but necessary truth.

We can fill in learning gaps. We can work to improve remote teaching models. We can find new ways to support students' emotional well-being. We cannot bring people back from the dead.

We hope that you will advocate for the lives of those in our school community and recommend that we start the school year remotely.

Thank you.

Signed, 131 Early Childhood Educators of Brookline Public Schools

(Highlighted names are classroom teachers prek-2)

1. Jillian Starr Coggeshall (Second Grade, Lawrence)
2. Katherine Grenzeback (Second Grade, Lawrence)
3. Keryn Gannon Steckloff (Second Grade, Lawrence)
4. Lily Chase-Lubitz (Second Grade, Lawrence)
5. Jessica Gordon (Kindergarten, Lawrence)
6. Dominique Ferdinand (Kindergarten, Lawrence)
7. Nora Carpenter (Kindergarten, Lawrence)
8. Joanna B. Lieberman (First Grade, Lawrence)
9. Jonathan Norwood (First Grade, Lawrence)
10. Suzanne Currie (First Grade, Lawrence)

11. Kris Frye (First Grade, Lawrence)
12. Jeremy Ward (Third Grade, Lawrence)
13. Laura Basileo (Math Specialist, Lawrence)
14. Terry Jewell (Literacy Specialist, Lawrence)
15. Leslie Fagen (ECS, Pierce & Lawrence)
16. Jennifer Heylin (K-2 Special Education, Lawrence)
17. Pamela Tully (Literacy Specialist, Lawrence)
18. Maggie Russell (Literacy Specialist, Lawrence)
19. Elizabeth Fowler (Learning Center Para, Lawrence)
20. Zoë Kern (World Language, Lawrence)
21. Kaitlin Robinson (K-3 World Language, Lawrence)
22. Akiko Kawai-Marbet (Grade 2 and 3 EL, Lawrence)
23. Kirsten Alper (ETS, Lawrence)
24. Beth Curley (Kindergarten, Baker)
25. Amy Lewin (First Grade, Baker)
26. Christine Bates (First Grade, Baker)

27. Kait Doherty (First Grade, Baker)
28. Laura Richardson (First Grade, Baker)
29. Meghan Naseck (Second Grade, Baker)
30. Jess Llewellyn (Second Grade, Baker)
31. Katie Wang (Literacy Specialist, Baker)
32. Sara Zekri (Literacy Specialist, Baker)
33. Anne Nasson (Occupational Therapist, Baker)
34. Brianna Fraser (K-2 Special Education, Baker)
35. Erica Melmed (Speech-Language Pathologist, Baker)
36. Danielle Baker (K-2 Special Education, Baker)
37. Megan Burdy Kaufman (Art, Baker)
38. Katy Moy (K-2 General Music and 6-8 Guitar and Ukulele)
39. Michelle Gorden (Kindergarten, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
40. Nicole Chasse (Kindergarten, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
41. Louise Herzog (Kindergarten, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
42. Randy G. Bradley-Campbell (Kindergarten, Florida Ruffin Ridley)

43. Patricia Foley (Kindergarten, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
44. Nicole Zografos (First Grade, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
45. Amanda Donahue (First Grade, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
46. Caroline Cadwell (First Grade, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
47. Hannah Judd (First Grade, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
48. Alicia Poulin (Second Grade, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
49. Amber Llanto (Second Grade, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
50. Daniel Lipton (Second Grade, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
51. Ellina Conlon (Second Grade, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
52. Wendy MacMillan (PS/PK)
53. Veronica McElaney (PS/PK)
54. Sarah Conroy (Kindergarten, Heath)
55. Becky Koocher (Kindergarten, Heath)
56. Margot Fox (Kindergarten, Heath)
57. Emily Redburn (First Grade, Heath)
58. Brianna O'Connell (First Grade, Heath)

59. Kim Sontag (First Grade, Heath)
60. Alyson Arsenault (Second Grade, Heath)
61. Chari Dalsheim (Second Grade, Heath)
62. Karen Shashoua (Second Grade, Heath)
63. Vicky Ferstler (Third Grade, Heath)
64. Marta Pedrero (Spanish K-4, Heath)
65. Emily Filippone (Kindergarten, Driscoll)
66. Deana Shea (Kindergarten, Driscoll)
67. Laura Stillman (Kindergarten, Driscoll)
68. Kayte Lenahan (Former K, Driscoll, currently First Grade, Florida Ruffin Ridley)
69. Mackenzie Snow (First Grade, Driscoll)
70. Danielle Harrington (First Grade, Driscoll)
71. Sarah Cuddihy (First Grade, Driscoll)
72. Angela Harvey (Second grade, Driscoll)
73. Erica Sullivan (Second Grade, Driscoll)

74. Susie Pescosolido (Second Grade, Driscoll)

75. Alice Kuniholm (Third Grade, Driscoll)

76. Jen Doubilet (Literacy Specialist, Driscoll)
77. Lauren Cecchini (K-8 Music, Driscoll)
78. Anne Reid (K-8 Library, Driscoll)
79. Jenna Laib (Math Specialist, Driscoll)
80. Jenny Singer (2-5 LAHB Special Education Teacher, Driscoll)
81. Jesse Kirdahy (Educational Technology Specialist, Driscoll School)
82. Tara Kelly (K-2 Learning Center Teacher, Driscoll)
83. Cindy Elias de Koster (K-2, K-3 LC Para, Driscoll)
84. Wan Wang (K-4 World Language, Driscoll)
85. Tania Magoufis (Kindergarten Paraprofessional, Driscoll School)
86. Andrea Beaser (Kindergarten, Lincoln)
87. Garnet Sarro (Kindergarten, Lincoln)
88. Maggie Canniff (Kindergarten, Lincoln)
89. Annie Mortara (First Grade, Lincoln)
90. Courtney O'Leary (First Grade, Lincoln)
91. Emmie Foster (First Grade, Lincoln)
92. Libby Kup (Second Grade, Lincoln)

Ashley Haese (Kindergarten, Runkle)
Kristen Haynes (Kindergarten, Runkle)
Sam Levine (First Grade, Runkle)
Carolyn Munchbach (First Grade, Runkle)
Jen Schultz (Physical Education, Runkle)
Ania Bigda (7/8 ELA, Runkle)
Shenandoah Paun (K-4 World Language, Runkle)
Tanya Paris (Kindergarten, Pierce)
Andrew Winston (Kindergarten, Pierce)
Eowyn Daly-Griffin (Kindergarten, Pierce)
Colleen Muldoon (Kindergarten, Pierce)
Hattie Venne (Kindergarten, Pierce)
Jenny Yee Malaguti (First Grade, Pierce)
Dominique Herard (First Grade, Pierce)
Laura West (First Grade, Pierce)
Heidi Young (First Grade, Pierce)
Sinéad Lynch (Second grade, Pierce)
Samantha Marsallo (Second Grade, Pierce)
Amanda Dulberg (Second Grade, Pierce)
Susan Leipman (Second Grade, Pierce)
Kim Barnum (Third Grade, Pierce)
Ben Fishkin (K-4 Special Education, Pierce)
Lindsey Shaw (1-4 Special Education, Pierce)
Jina Han (K-8 Music, Pierce)
Chris Lee-Rodriguez (Instrumental Music, Traveling Conservatory)
Amanda Kretschmar (K-8 Library, Pierce)
Anne Sheridan (K-8 Music, Pierce)
Leslie Prime (1-3 Spanish, Pierce)
Amelia Black (K-8 Art, Pierce)
Tim Hintz (K-2 Guidance, Pierce)
Robin O'Malley (Para/Pierce)
Dr. Meredith Huntley (Music/Heath)

Yaping Tang (ELE Grades 3-7, Pierce)
Jin Chen (ELE Grades K-3 and 8, Pierce)
Erin Yang (Literacy Specialist, Pierce)
Deborah Levine (ELE 3-7 at Pierce)