



March 10, 2021

Remote Testimony in Opposition to SB 235

Dr. Alicia Miguel, Interim Superintendent,
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Dear Chairperson Williams and Members of the K-12 Committee:

I appreciate this opportunity to speak regarding SB 235. Needless to say, the past year has been challenging for all of us. Our Kansas educational system has certainly encountered its fair share of challenges. Our Board of Education, Administration and staff have worked closely with local health professionals to deliver education services in the safest manner possible. Wyandotte County has challenges unique to our citizens that perhaps are more severe than most counties in Kansas. Wyandotte County has consistently experienced infection rates well above the statewide average. Even today as rates go down our rate is 11% while statewide the number is under 5%. In December and January, Wyandotte County rates reached 43%. Compound an enormous infection rate with a county with high levels of poverty and very high numbers of uninsured citizens and it has simply not been safe nor feasible to provide in person learning. In Wyandotte County and specifically the core inner city areas that comprise KCKPS, we have large numbers of multi-generational families and the fear of students and staff bringing the virus home to elderly family members is very real.

All this being said, KCKPS, our students, families and staff: We all want to return to in person learning, when it is clearly safe to do so. Our Board of Education mapped out a plan for our district based on recommendations we received from our local health officials earlier this year (see timeline at the bottom of this document), and we have been slowly returning key groups of students to in person learning since November. Our plan is to have all students who chose in person learning be able to return by April 5. We anticipate we will have a large number of students who will want to continue with remote. SB 235 will require us to move up our schedule by six school days. Those are days that we were going to use to plan and practice mitigating procedures, to ensure that everyone is clear on distance, passing periods, seating arrangements in class, etc. We listened to the debate in the Senate and heard Senators say SB 235 is not a mandate, just a recommendation with no enforcement provision. But the bill is very short and easy to read and there should be no misunderstanding when it says every school district shall provide an in person learning option by March 26th. If SB 235 becomes law we will move our in-person date forward to March 26, as we have every intention to comply with state law.



Finally let me say that this worldwide pandemic has been a learning experience for all of us. I certainly count myself in that category. I have found the experience in working with local officials who know Wyandotte County and the needs of our citizens to be very helpful. School districts are products of our communities and therefore no two are exactly alike. Even in Wyandotte County we have major differences. This is why we believe that the collaboration between local school boards and local health officials makes the most sense in determining the best course of action. SB 235 promotes a one size fits all scenario and it is simply not that easy. The direction this bill dictates is much more important than the March 26, 2021 date associated with it. If passed, it is on the books until it is changed. In case we experience another emergency, or a resurgence of the virus, I would hope state officials understand the need to provide a level of flexibility for Kansas communities, so that we can respond as efficiently and effectively at the local level. The current bill does not provide that flexibility. We all of course, understand that sometimes the threat is so great that state action has to be taken, and we want to be supportive partners when the need arises.

Madame Chairperson, I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

KCKPS Re-entry Timeline

August 2020 –

Re-Entry Task Force Weekly Meetings to discuss return to in person learning.

Wyandotte County August average percent positivity 20% (**Peak 28% on 8/10**).

September 2020 –

September 8th Board of Education Meeting - USD 500 Cabinet provided an informational report to the Board of Education proposing EC-12 Full Return in person with mitigations or EC-12 Hybrid Return with mitigations beginning November 9, 2020.

Wyandotte County 7-day percent positivity 23% (**Peak 24% on 9/9**).

September 22nd Board of Education Meeting - USD 500 Cabinet provided an informational report to the Board of Education proposing four plan options for re-entry beginning November 9, 2020. Re-entry model options included



- Plan A- EC-12 Full Remote
- Plan B- EC-5 Hybrid and 6-12 Full Remote
- Plan C- EC-12 Hybrid
- Plan D- EC-12 Full Return in person with list of specific building mitigations.

Wyandotte County 7-day **percent positivity 19%**.

October 2020 –

October 13th Board of Education Meeting - USD 500 Cabinet proposed a return to school for students remaining in Remote Learning through January 4th. It was proposed for K-2 students to return on January 4th. It was proposed that grades 3-12 would return on January 25th.

Board Of Education decided to delay the return of students using the EC-12 Hybrid Model until January, due to Wyandotte County 7-day percent positivity 16% (Peak 28% on 10/28). The following dates were proposed dates when students would return to Hybrid Learning:

- January 19th Return date for EC-2 grade students using Hybrid Model.
- January 26th Return date for 3rd-12th grade students using Hybrid Model.

Wyandotte County 7-day percent positivity 16% (**Peak 28% on 10/28**).

November 2020 –

November 9th - Local Health Order issued requiring that all school children and educators must wear masks at all times while inside and outdoors. The use of N95 masks for educators and school staff is highly encouraged. Students and staff may wear masks made of paper or cloth. All school children and educators must maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet at all times. Children must be cohorted to limit the number of staff and students in an enclosed space to allow proper distancing.

November 10th Board of Education Meeting - USD 500 Cabinet provided a detailed update in regard to Hybrid Learning for January student return.

Wyandotte County 7-day percent positivity 24% (**Peak 39% on 11/30**).

November 16th - Return of English Language Learners to in-person learning at three Intensive Language sites.



Wyandotte County 7-day percent **positivity 35%**.

December 2020 –

December 1st Board of Education Meeting - USD 500 Cabinet proposed three options for a student return:

- Option 1- Postpone the January return of students for in-person learning until the end of 3rd quarter (April 5th)
- Option 2- Postpone the January return of students for in-person learning until the COVID-19 positivity rates decrease (<15% per the KSDE Gating Criteria)
- Option 3- Continue with the Board decision to return in January.

The Board of Education chose Option 1 which delayed the return of students to April 5th due to community spread. Wyandotte County **7-day percent positivity 41%**.

Second survey sent out to KCKPS families to ask for their desire for in-person learning:

- Return: 9348 students
- Remain Remote: 7603 students
- Did not respond: 3110 This group of students will be included in the in-person return

December 7th - Return to in-person learning for the first group of high needs special education students. Wyandotte County 7-day percent positivity 40%.

December 15th update to the Board of Education of the number of students facing challenges with connectivity (This was in spite of the district distributing more than 4000 hotspots).

Wyandotte County 7-day percent positivity 34%. (**Peak 43% on 12/28**).

January 2021 –

January 4th, Local Health Order allowing elementary cohorts to be divided into groups or “pods” with 4-5 students each. Students within a pod are allowed to sit closer than six feet apart, while wearing masks at all times. Educators and staff are strongly encouraged to wear N95 or KN95 masks. Students must wear either a paper mask or a cloth mask with at least 2 layers of fabric. Middle and high school students make a limited number of classroom changes throughout the day (each student may go to up to four classrooms). Most students may be part of up to four classroom cohorts.



January 11th return to in-person learning for the second group of high needs special education students. (125 students returned between December and January dates).
Wyandotte County 7-day percent positivity 30%.

January 26th proposal of re-entry of students with connectivity issues as an informational item.
Wyandotte County 7-day percent positivity 26%. (**Peak 43% on 1/3**).

February 2021 –

February 9th Board of Education Meeting, BOE approved the return of students with connectivity issues for K-5 and seniors who were not on track to graduate.
Wyandotte County 7-day percent **positivity 12%**.

February 16th Essential staff return for February 22nd phases of students.
Wyandotte County 7-day percent **positivity 12%**.

February 22nd return to in-person learning for the third group of high needs students.
High needs special education students (164 students including previous groups)
Elementary students with connectivity issues (1281 students)
Seniors who may not be on track to graduate (315 students)

February 23rd Board of Education will have further dialogue in regard to providing more students in-person learning up to and before April 5th return date.

March 2021 –

March 1st over 200 middle students will return who have connectivity issues. Number is subject to increase as parent contacts continue.

March 9th- Board of Education will have further dialogue in regard to providing more students in-person learning up to and before April 5th return date.

April 2021 –

April 5th Return to in-person learning for over 85% of our student body (students who selected in person learning) – or March 26 if the bill passes.