

Good evening. My name is Jessi Walsh and I have been a Kindergarten teacher in the district for the past ten years. I am speaking to you tonight because I, like many of my colleagues am deeply concerned about the well-being and health of our children. I have spent the better part of a decade focusing on child development, social emotional learning and creating a trauma sensitive classroom. I am very aware of the need for interaction and relationships, but I do not agree that returning in person at this time would be beneficial for our students and in fact would pose a greater risk. If we were to return in person right now, students will be walking into a foreign sterile classroom, with very few comforts. The school they knew in March is no longer a reality. Not to mention ongoing trauma from illness and possible death in the school community. This can all be avoided by keeping buildings closed and allowing children to learn remotely, until it is safe.

How does putting students in a high risk environment with these restrictive (though necessary) measure help their social and emotional growth? And that is assuming we are even able to overcome the monetary, resource, and logistical obstacles necessary for in person learning.

I am probably not alone when I say Mr. Rogers had a huge role in shaping my own social-emotional development and continues to influence my interactions with my students. And I never met him. I never even spoke to him through a screen. I only watched him through my tv. But, he still make me feel loved, respected and cared for...and I even learned a thing or tsw. I do not doubt my ability, or the ability of my colleagues to build relationships through a virtual format until it is safe to be together in person again. We can help mitigate trauma and not add to it by a rush back to the building when we are not ready to do so safely.

I start every day in my classroom by reminding my students that my number one job is to keep them safe. That's still my number one job and that's what I'm trying to do right now. *How will the district ensure the safety of our students, families, staff and entire community? Right now, there are too many unanswered questions to open school buildings safely..*