



Public Comment Responses Received During the WPS BOE Meeting on 10/13/2020

Below is the public record of public comment responses received during the 10/13/2020 BOE meeting.

DISCUSSION

1. **Next School Reopening Phase** - Public comments are posted exactly as received

First and Last Name	Address	Please state your comment/question regarding Next School Reopening Phase.
John Bayers	Test	Test
Julianne Lowenthal	9 Melon Patch Lane	We agree with your recommendation to stay the course with AM/PM hybrid. My Elementary child is thriving in this model.
Vanessa Weinbach	6 Riverfield Drive	Thank you Mr Scarice for your extremely thoughtful and careful approach to our children's safety, wellness and education. I am fully in support of your approach and decision tonight to remain hybrid. I am also so thankful to be a part of such an intelligent, holistic, and empathic learning community. Thank you!
Ashley lancer	5d gorham Avenue	It sounds like you're not opening fully/normally. It's really saddening as my daughter has been in cohort B and we have had significant disruptions and delays with the bus system. She's missed almost a third of her days for almost all of the school year so far. I would've hoped we would've gone back to full days so that each cohort would be equalized. I think he will see that cohort A will be completely distraught and upset when they see what has happened with cohort B if they send their kids on the bus. We're getting next to nothing in the school day if they're missing so much.
Alex Thompson	Compo Area	What are the trends and data around the mental health, which is equally as important and should be addressed in this meeting, for these children and the families where this current situation is in fact, not working?
Richard Jones	57 Roseville Rd	You must keep the hybrid model - numbers trending upward is a HUGE warning not to open elementary fully

<p>Athena McAlenney</p>	<p>26 Bauer Place</p>	<p>You have made a compelling case, Superintendent Scarice. I think this is a wise decision across all metrics and our family agrees that hybrid seems to be in the best instructional interests of our children. (And my kids are thrilled that they don't have to add double the desks and then have, and I quote, "no feet" between them, so they thank you, too.)</p>
<p>Steven Seltzer</p>	<p>18 church st s 06880</p>	<p>I I pose the following questions. Direct and specific answers are appreciated.</p> <p>Why do you emphasize trend so much? If rates are 5% now, they need to double before state believes it's not problematic. If rate was 6% trending downward, why's that preferable?</p> <p>Why is Weston in school and we're not if they rely on same data? Are we wasting time?</p> <p>Why is it relevant that we started with partial instruction? If full time is best, what is holding back Westport that is not holding back other towns?</p> <p>Isn't educational efficacy a given? Shouldn't we expect quality education? If we know hybrid isn't as good, why should it be acceptable? We've lost two core classes. Why do other towns think it's better to be full time?</p> <p>Why do you assume school will definitely be distance in 4 weeks? By your logic, transmission rates need to double before there's an issue. All this guarantees is that our kids get less education?</p> <p>Why would hybrid model ensure some in-school education all year? Teachers overlap both cohorts, so risk of contagion is constant.</p> <p>Are you saying teachers are incapable of teaching students full time in pandemic setting?</p>
<p>Shiri homler</p>	<p>7 sniffen road</p>	<p>I think that the hybrid model has afforded our students the best chance possible right now. I think we are all concerned about the mental well-being of our children. How would a full time pandemic model, with full time mask wearing, and confinement to desks make things better?</p>

<p>Shruti Gupta</p>	<p>49 Treadwell Ave, westport</p>	<p>We trust your judgement in keeping the hybrid model for hopefully a few weeks longer even though as a working parent I would really like school to be full time. My real big ask is that fifth Graders can't have just one sheet of homework and 30min special after coming home. They need more assigned activities- it can be Lexia, xtramath or whatever else. how would my fifth grader be ready for sixth grade with just 2 and half hours of school. And secondly whenever u hold the next meeting for discussion to go full time let it not be competition of which side sends more emails to you or who posts the most comments on facebook. Please look at the data and decide. We trust you . We love KHS teachers and really thank them for teaching in this pandemic.</p>
<p>Ida Hsu</p>	<p>Old Road</p>	<p>Greatly appreciate Mr. Scarice's even-handed evaluation and thorough, thoughtful explanation of the rationale both for and against an immediate return to full days at the elementary level, obviously appreciating the value of returning for full days in school, but acknowledging the trade-offs and risks we'd have to make. Agree that Westport has done a fabulous job providing on-site daily instruction for elementary students, and I appreciate his highlighting how we differ from other schools in the area in a positive way.</p> <p>Yale medical leadership also indicated in a meeting on Monday that the current uptick of cases in CT may be the start of a "second wave", for which they are now preparing. As a working parent who has to arrange for after (and now during) school child care, I also support the effort to keep our teaching model stable, ie prevent shifts back and forth to hybrid or even remote learning as we look at uptrending numbers and colder weather.</p>
<p>Rob Simmelkjaer</p>	<p>6 Side Hill Rd, Westport, CT</p>	<p>Superintendent Scarice,</p> <p>Thank you for your work in this challenging time. Your statement tonight is heavily based on what you say is a higher than expected quality of elementary school instruction in the current hybrid model. Can you state with certainty that elementary school instruction in the district, given the time out of school last year combined with the limited time in school this year, is on par with where it would be without the pandemic? In other words, are you saying our kids haven't fallen behind during the pandemic? When and how will this educational deficit be made up?</p>
<p>Jory Eisenberg</p>	<p>22 Old Hill Road</p>	<p>Mr. Scarice, I greatly appreciate your reasoned approach to weighing health concerns with the educational needs of our children. While not perfect, the hybrid model has allowed our kids to continue to experience school in a live classroom setting. Health experts across the country almost universally agree that spikes in transmission rates will occur over the coming months with social distancing being the only effective preventative until a vaccine is available in late 2021 at the earliest. I understand that both you and the board are under considerable pressure to</p>

		reopen but I applaud your courage in evaluating a very real prevalent risk. It wouldn't do any of us any good to do a full reopen for 2 weeks and then spend the rest of the year in distance learning due to uncontrollable outbreaks.
David Lange	2 Pond Rd.	Is there any plan for regular testing of administration, staff, faculty and/or students to help figure out more specifically whether elementary, middle, and high schools are contributing to rising transmission rates, as opposed to observation of general community transmission rates?
Brian Kane	8 Sunnyside Lane	<p>The original intent of opening in a hybrid model was to be cautious. The reason for caution was the possibility of a rapid rise in cases. That has not happened, and it is time for full-time in person schooling as most of our neighboring districts have already done. These districts have not seen increased cases or spread. Studies of school reopenings across the country have found minimal transmission among children.</p> <p>We should have been back in school full time 4 weeks ago when the school year started. We should not be deferring the decision to return another 4 weeks because data might change. The data is clear, has been clear.</p> <p>The half day education model is not a happy surprise. The quality of education is wildly limited and insufficient. If half day schooling was superior, this model would not have been something school districts moved away from 3 decades ago.</p> <p>The Board needs to take this decision back from the Mr. Scarice. He has demonstrated an unwillingness to accept the data as it is and has disqualified himself from making this decision. The Board is ultimately responsible for this choice and will be held accountable for their lack of action. The pain this lack of a decision has inflicted on families is real and will leave scars across our community that will far outlast this current crisis.</p>
Erica Bryniczka	44 Maple Ave S	Thank you, Mr Scarice! We feel strongly that the hybrid model is the safest at this point.
Fei Ye	4 Keller Ln, Westport, CT	Question to Thomas Scarice, you talked about covid 19 cases trending up in Fairfield County and Westport is one of the factors to keep the hybrid model for 4-6 more weeks. The reporting of covid 19 cases has a delay factor and the data is always trailing behind the reality, not to mention the rates are volatile, it could be up one week down another week and have various interpretations. Do you have a more clear-cut scientific criterion in your mind that Westport elementary schools would be fully open, like some other districts successfully did?
Chuck Haberstroh	3 Hermit Court	What I'm hearing: Based on 'trends and numbers', we should have been fully open from the beginning of the school year. And in no way would these new numbers force you to move to hybrid in that scenario. You are also saying that traditional ways of schooling are not as good as this 'Westport' model. If this were the case, why aren't other districts moving to 'our' model? This is

		<p>so very disappointing and overly complicated. I would hope the BOE would push back here. Rates and trends remaining low was the key. We've done it. Now the model is the key? Thanks.</p>
John Mack	142 Compo Road North	<p>This is a really disappointing outcome.</p> <p>This doesn't seem to leave a path to full in person schooling and is hard on both students and parents.</p> <p>Rates will go up and down and predictions can be wrong or right. How long do they have to go down before you send kids back? Then if they start going up again all within the low category do we move to hunting again? What if the health authorities predict an increase over the holidays but are rare are stable do we not go back?</p> <p>This also doesn't take into account how hard this is on our students and parents. The in school might be fine but the at home portion is still a big loss compared to having the students in school. You didn't mention this part of the learning at all. What happens when our peer schools in other towns perform better in testing? How will we think about this model then. How do you weigh in more and more physicians are saying kids aren't spreaders based on how many elementary schools across the country are back in school.</p> <p>This doesn't even bring into the impact on parents who have to manage the odd schedule and work as other schools have opened the pressure on us to be in office has increased.</p> <p>This is really unfair to our town.</p>
Denise Sheedy	20 highland rd	<p>I have a couple of questions.</p> <p>Since the decision has been made to not go back. Is there a opportunity to go to in person on the Wednesday that we are distance learning?</p> <p>When will we reevaluate returning full time again?</p>
Gregg Bromberg	159 Roseville RD Westport CT 06880	<p>Can you comment on what sources you have reporting an increase of cases in Westport? According to the CT Dept of Health since Oct 5 Westport has reported 9 cases. I would like to understand how much lower than 9 we would need to go back to school full time for elementary and understand if we are looking at % as well absolute figures. Thanks</p>
nick	old mill	<p>Why is there constant reference to 20-24 kids in a classroom when there is a fraction of that that will be electing for full time instruction. There is alot of comments that 'its working great !' and you visited and talked to some students, but have you spoken to what i believe would be the majority of the parents who are being forced to stay at home who can comment on the negative impact that this is having to kids not being back full</p>

		time? This is not definitely not working what is working is private schools and catholic schools where everything is going well.
Betsy Amitin	8 Colony Road	If we stay in the Hybrid Learning model, would you ever consider keeping the AM and PM cohorts in their current schedules without switching as previously planned? Would you be willing to survey elementary school families to see if they still want to switch AM/PM cohort schedules now that children, their families, and their childcare providers have been growing accustomed to the current morning or afternoon routine?
Jennifer DeLeonardo	23 West Branch Road	Thank you Mr. Scarice for your thoughtful and open-minded consideration of the district's next steps. As the parents of two elementary students attending hybrid, we appreciate that you are keeping at the forefront of your decision-making what model optimizes the quality of the education that can be provided in this challenging year. We fully support your decision to stay in small hybrid classes, rather than sticking our kids stationary in their desks for six hours a day just so that we can say our kids are in school full-time. I say this even though we are a two-parent working family struggling through working from home while helping teach from home. Our only ask is to add some science, even the weekly science lessons/projects that the kids were getting last spring would be great. Thank you!
Steven Seltzer	18 church st s 06880	It appears that the logistics of a full reopening have not been sufficiently contemplated. Why have they not if full reopening is the goal and what will be done now to address these deficiencies?
Tyrone Mack	Compo road north	One of the key elements I didn't hear addressed or considered is parent fatigue throughout all of this. PLEASE don't add more work for parents by shifting additional work to then non-school time. In the process, please don't try to gaslight us that this current model has been great for smaller teaching groups.
Raymond Tang	12 Stony Brook Road Westport	Have you looked into having the lower grades in school full time in bigger classrooms?
Marni Lane	marnilane@gmail.com	I am extremely disappointed by this decision for so many reasons, and I am wondering why no Board Members have fully challenged it. This is an incredible disservice to our elem school children, and the long term data will show that. This is not sustainable, and we have lost so much ground. Why is no one representing any of the parents who feel their children are being failed by our school system? Are Westport numbers increasing or just the state? Why is this not a problem for Darien, New Canaan, Greenwich and Norwalk elementary schools? We are going to fall very far behind our neighboring towns with long term ramifications. Once an avid learner, my second grade daughter is falling behind and is losing her love of learning because of this hybrid schedule. She struggles doing work independently and then loses confidence, which has long-term consequences. She

		is now frustrated and feels “dumb,” which is a word we never heard her use. My husband and I both work full time and we both try to alternate working with her when she is doing remote learning, but it is a major struggle. This is not how she learns best. She needs her talented teachers, she needs consistency and she needs to be in school. If the Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk and Greenwich school districts can offer this for their elementary school students, I do not see why we can’t too. This is a complete and utter failure for our children.
John Mack	142 Compo Road North	To be clear based on what you are saying we won’t go back full time until the earliest January?
Jeni Bianco	2 Stony Point RD Westport CT 06880	Is the amount of screen time being discussed as a contributing factor for these children ? Especially for children with vision issues, the amount of screen time in school, combined with specials and then homework seems very excessive. Is there a way to discuss more pencil to paper work for homework through Hybrid model?
Julie Potack	6 Wedgewood Road	I understand that there are many limitations to a classroom in this current environment. But, even with these limitations and missed moments, hours in school are better spent than hours at home. Our children have had 7 months of limited structure and too much down time. 2 1/2 hours of schooling a day, after all of these months at home, is not sufficient. Would you consider sending all elementary students to school for 4-5 hours per day? That may seem more manageable, while still giving our children the structure, socialization and education that they deserve. Thank you for all of your hard work and continued efforts
Joe Nader	36 Westfair Dr	I would like to express my support to the school administration’s decision, and thank everyone for their hard work during these difficult times. We are grateful for our kids to attend school even half day, and are all hopeful that normalcy is not too far away.
Rob Simmelkjaer	6 Side Hill Rd, Westport, CT	Superintendent Scarice, Thank you for your work in this challenging time. Your statement tonight is heavily based on what you say is a higher than expected quality of elementary school instruction in the current hybrid model. Can you state with certainty that elementary school instruction in the district, given the time out of school last year combined with the limited time in school this year, is on par with where it would be without the pandemic? In other words, are you saying our kids haven’t fallen behind during the pandemic? When and how will this educational deficit be made up?

Rob Simmelkjaer	6 Side Hill Rd, Westport, CT	<p>Superintendent Scarice,</p> <p>Thank you for your work in this challenging time. Your statement tonight is heavily based on what you say is a higher than expected quality of elementary school instruction in the current hybrid model. Can you state with certainty that elementary school instruction in the district, given the time out of school last year combined with the limited time in school this year, is on par with where it would be without the pandemic? In other words, are you saying our kids haven't fallen behind during the pandemic? When and how will this educational deficit be made up?</p>
Amanda Kirby	49 Clinton Avenue	<p>Thank you. Our family fully supports the decision to continue with the hybrid approach. The unique AM/PM model is working well, our children are learning in the most critical subject areas, and most importantly, we feel SAFE sending our kids to school.</p>
Rosie Curtis	4 Heritage Ct	<p>Thank you Mr Scarice, BoE, our principals and teachers who value our children's well-being above all things during a pandemic, which is equivalent to a modern day world war. Our children will look back on this and remember the life lessons learnt, how a community came together to do what is best for our children not just academically, but for their social emotional health too. We appreciate you and your dedication to continue to learn and grow from lessons learned during this time. Thank you.</p>
Marni Lane	marnilane@gmail.com	<p>Who are your medical experts? Where is the research and data you're referencing? Why are some districts using different models? "Doing best for the kids" is not mitigating masks. It's about getting the kids back in school full-time.</p>
Jennifer Lindstrom	Side Hill Road	<p>Is there a possibility to expand sources like science to embrace the environment where we live. Could we do something like once a month outings to a beach or marsh? We have the planetarium could there be something there? How could we innovate the next level of education as we are an amazing district?</p>
Jaime Bairaktaris	52 Hales Court	<p>Would the School District consider utilizing more support staff members as social-emotional assistants during "Pandemic learning"? This could look like paraeducators or other non-certified staff members staying in areas such as the cafeteria, recess spaces, classrooms, or other common areas with the purpose of connecting with students to primarily focus on their social-emotional health - leading social-emotional health activities, speaking about their days or weekends, and building a relationship. This would give students a trusted adult to speak and interact with regularly and in a positive way, which will quickly allow this social-emotional assistant to recognize a student who needs support and connect them to the proper departments. They could operate underneath the guidance office or psychologist's office, and help bridge the gap between students and those support services that they may need.</p>

Jenna Lask	12 Long Lots Lane	Thank you for making a thoughtful decision in the best interest of our children. I agree with all of the benefits of this model through an extremely difficult time, and feel lucky to live in Westport.
Kristen Rossi	Bauer Place Ext.	I was all for full time reopening pending appropriate safety measures. After listening and understanding to the differences between a normal classroom and a “pandemic” classroom and realizing how our hybrid model differs from other towns, I support the decision to stay in hybrid for right now. Following the trending data and taking a “wait and see” approach while we continue to succeed in educating our elementary students in a half day, in person, daily model makes sense for the short term. As the conditions evolve, and appropriate mitigation measures can be taken, I fully support a return to full time education.
Carly Ritter	48 Whitney street	While we still be in the hybrid model, can you reconsider the switch to mid year instead of quarterly? Young students cannot excel within inconsistency. Many of the students took a while to get used to their daily schedule. Please do not disrupt what they are now accustomed to. Thank you
Dori Bomback	56 Easton Rd	Can you please provide a realistic opening timeframe for CMS. I live around the corner and can't see how this building will be ready to receive students in November. It just doesn't feel like we are getting accurate information.
Carlos Gonzales	Fairview Ave	Thank you for all of your hard work teachers, admins, and central office staff! My son is new to Staples/Westport and my wife is a teacher at KHS. She lives at school to make sure her kids are taken care of and my son although only in school 2 days a week is full engaged all 5 days.
Devin Taylor	9 Woodcock Lane	The concept introduced tonight that the current hybrid model is more desirable than a full return from a pedagogical perspective requires more explanation, especially because Mr. Scarice has now said that a full return will not occur until social distancing and other guidelines are relaxed. Mr. Scarice has said repeatedly that he relies on medical professionals to inform his decisions. Has any medical professional told Mr. Scarice that such relaxation is within the realm of realistic possibility? What are the downsides of remaining in this model from a pedagogical perspective? It would be helpful to understand how Mr. Scarice balanced the pros and cons and arrived at his conclusion.

Jen Canavan	Birch St	With all due respect, the decision to stay hybrid is a complete failure to our kids and community. How has every other town made this work? Are you privy to trend data that other districts are ignoring? How do you explain fall sports being back in session where kids are not wearing masks and no issues arising? The only upwards trend you will see with this decision is an uptick in mental health issues, and people losing their jobs because they simply cannot do it all. How about at least going back 5 DAYS a week and cut the every other Wed off? How about allowing the youngest learners (K-2) to go back full day? This age group is simply not capable of working independently at home. I think you should spend some of your "field time" in households where both parents work while also trying navigate a drastically abbreviated school day and balance the guilt/frustration associated with coaxing their 6 year olds to do required schoolwork everyday. Once you see the reality in action for yourself, you will realize that this hybrid model is NOT working in the majority of households and there is no reason for us not to be back full time.
Laura Amatucci	16 Hermit Ln	Has there been consideration for sending Special Education students back full time if we continue a hybrid model?
Cameryn Robinson	Greens Farms Area	As a parent and an educator in the district, my family and many of my school colleagues support the hybrid model. It is the safest choice. There are many sacrifices that are taking place to make this happen- but it is safest. Thank you for your endorsement of this model.
David Greely	7 Caccamo Lane	Thank you Mr Scarice for your thorough and thoughtful weighing of the pros and cons of staying within the hybrid model at this point. We have found the half day hybrid model has been very successful for our daughter under what is a trying year. I do not think that full days with less movement would be in her best educational interest at this time. Thank you and the school administrators for all your work.
Jennifer Lindstrom	7 Side Hill	Thank you all to the men who stepped up to speak virtually tonight. I encourage all the executive women in Westport to be more vocal.
Carly Ritter	48 Whitney Street	While we will still be in the hybrid model, can you reconsider the switch to mid-year instead of quarterly? Young students cannot excel within inconsistency. Many of the students took a while to get used to their daily schedule. Please do not disrupt what they're now accustomed to, thank you.