

If I could get a decision maker to listen to what it takes for successful face to face instruction, here is what I would tell them:

**1. Be firm with families and remind them often what it takes for schools to remain open**

Here is an example of what you could say: If you want schools to remain open remember everyone in the household needs to make good choices 24/7 not just while in school. This message should be tweeted, emailed, announced, and done so weekly at a minimum. The message of being a COMMUNITY has never been more important. It is about priorities. If we all truly want schools open safely, everyone needs to be on the same page, at school, after school and on the weekends.

**2. Be innovative.** The best solutions to this unprecedented scenario will not look anything like what we have done before. It is more important than ever to have a clear vision and use that vision to make a successful plan. Here is an example: Our number one goal is to educate not to provide child care. So we must look at this as the best way to provide education in a SUSTAINABLE way. It might be remote learning. This on again, off again, start and stop filled with quarantines is very ineffective. Also- fair is not always equal. We need to see who needs in person the most and do everything we can to provide for those students. It should not be "open for all or open for none"- clearly priority should be given to those struggling academically and emotionally.

**3. Science should drive decision making.** For example- what are the most dangerous parts of a school day? Eating lunch with no masks. Therefore if you want the face to face to be successful do half days with bag lunches that students take home. Also face to face time should be shorter. Viral load has a lot to do with catching this. So either have true cohorts like you could in an elementary class or have short class but these so-called cohorts with teachers teaching six different rosters and students attending 8 different mixed classes do not set us up for successful in-person learning.

**4. Ask for teacher and parent input-** Don't just listen to the squeaky wheel. So many of these decisions are made by people who are not living it day by day. Here is the latest example- Parents were told the students could choose whether they attend in person or not. They can choose class by class if they want to come to school or be remote. The teacher has no idea who might be there any given period. There are teachers planning face to face instruction only to have one student show up for class and the rest to be remote. This totally changes the lesson. Teachers are told to be flexible without any consideration to how "being flexible" every single period of every single day can create exhaustion and set them up for lessons not to feel successful. It is more important than ever to make decisions that support everyone, including teachers.

**5. Communicate sincere information not positive platitudes**

Here is an example: When the county moves to orange and teachers are told this will change the quarantine process and teachers ask how will it change and the answer is- we need to be flexible and see how it plays out. No- there should be a clear plan already in place. In order for us to feel safe we need to know thought is going into all of the scenarios.

6. **Don't punish teachers for asking questions.** Everyone should feel safe to understand the process and what is happening. When you use phrases like- "you have a choice- you can resign" you are creating a threatening atmosphere rather than one of trust. (Not to mention- our choice is leave of absence so using the term resign is definitely not coming from a place of support.)
7. **Avoid hypocrisy** - Related to the communication that because of rising cases, parents and students can choose to stay remote. But teachers can't make that choice. To me the unstated message is - teachers you take the risk but students don't have to.