

February 17, 2021

Dr. Lesli Myers-Small, Superintendent  
Rochester City School District  
131 West Broad St.  
Rochester, NY 14614

Dear Superintendent,

The Children's Agenda fully supports your decision to adopt a hybrid learning model with in-person instructional options available to all Rochester City School District (RCSD) students. Multiple studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)<sup>1</sup> and in the Journal of The American Academy of Pediatrics,<sup>2</sup> have shown that transmission rates of COVID-19 within schools are very low when social-distancing and mask wearing are in place.

We do not yet know the full impact of long-term remote instruction on students' academic progress and social-emotional wellbeing. Some studies suggest the learning loss could be significant, equivalent to months if not years of lost instruction time, especially among the most vulnerable populations, which make up a large percentage of RCSD's student body<sup>3</sup>. At the same time the loss of nutritional assistance, socialization, and regular access to specialized services for physical and learning disabilities are devastating for many students.

Many RCSD parents have expressed deep concerns to us about the impact of the pandemic and remote instruction on their children. RCSD's own internal survey from October, 2020 found 28.2% of parent respondents were either unsatisfied or deeply concerned about remote instruction. A recent Raising New York poll of parents with very young children found 62% of parents were concerned their children had lost developmental and emotional skills during the pandemic. A return to in-person instruction is critical for these struggling families.

The Children's Agenda is committed to following the best available evidence and following parents' wishes for what works best for children and youth. Right now the consensus of the scientific and academic community is that in-person learning can be done safely and should be a priority to protect the wellbeing of students. We will stand with you in navigating through these difficult decisions and responding to changing circumstances. The goal should always be to get all students back to full time in-person instruction as safely and as soon as possible. Thank you for taking this important first step.

Sincerely,



Larry Marx  
CEO



Eamonn Scanlon  
Education Policy Director

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6950e3.htm?s\\_cid=mm6950e3\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6950e3.htm?s_cid=mm6950e3_w)

<sup>2</sup> <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2021/01/06/peds.2020-048090.full.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/05/Collaborative-Brief\\_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf](https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/05/Collaborative-Brief_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf)

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