

My kids have attended SPS for the last five years. They are at Waltherville Elementary, and Thurston Middle School.

I am also a Triage Nurse for a set of medical clinics in the Eugene/Springfield area.

In this role, I have spent so much time discussing Covid -19 with my patients this year,. I have educated on risks, on best practices, and then later on management methods or when to get to the hospital when it. I've listened as patients cried, telling me about the death of their parents, siblings and children. I've had to learn a lot more about public health guidelines and practices than I had previously needed to. I've seen the stress families undergo as they are quarantined at home, often with children who are climbing the walls.

And I've talked to the many patients who had Covid, and now months later are still having life changing effects.

I say this so you understand my perspective when I talk to you about why you should not open to any in-person instruction.

They say that we can keep kids safe, by making sure they are socially distanced all day. Do any of you believe that is truly possible? But let's say it's true, and the kids do a perfect job of staying socially distanced. If they spend even just a few hours in a room without appropriate filtration, especially if their time there includes any kind of eating, drinking, mask breaks.. etc, then it will be considered a positive exposure. Distance and masks buy us time, but when they are in the same room for any significant amount of time, those preventative measures aren't enough to prevent exposure.

Which at the least, will mean that if someone goes to school sick, then children will be out of school again under quarantine, only this time, falling behind their classmates.

At the worst, there will be serious illness, and possibly death. Even worse than a quick death on a ventilator, is the uncertainty of knowing exactly how your child has been damaged, and how best to provide care for the rest of their life.

Newer, more virulent and more child-affecting versions of COVID-19 are coming.

Then there are two things about child exposure that aren't being talked about very loudly.

One - Child contacts aren't being followed, and kids are frequently not being tested. Parents tend to assume that if they get sick and test positive, their kids likely might have been sick with the same thing, around the same time, and don't track who infected who. Thus, the kids seldom end up on contract tracing, either. Adults look to other adults. This means we don't actually know how much kids have been vectors in the past months as symptomatic and asymptomatic carriers.

Two - With adults, we know there are after effects. Serious ones are reported on, but almost half of the adults I speak to discuss still having respiratory symptoms, fatigue.. sometimes not bad enough to qualify as an ongoing syndrome, etc, but certainly enough that they feel it every day. Kids may or may not be lucky that they usually contract such mild symptoms. Fear is reasonable that there may be effects that lie dormant, and the fact that something this deadly happens during their developmental years has its own negative results, entirely different than those studied in adults. In fact, we probably won't know all the effects for years until our kids are adults with kids of their own. I've already had my share of watching kids die, and all my medical knowledge says that they cannot safely just, "be," in a room with their classmates. So my kids will stay home.

But. That doesn't change that schools are likely to become our next hotspot of Covid cases. I grieve for the families who are going to lose grandparents, parents, and perhaps students. I grieve more for the teachers, because they are being forced to go back to work, and put they and their families at risk, to avoid losing their career, and to be able to continue to support the kids they love.

For the school district.. don't open to in-person instruction. Your teachers, staff and students rely on you to make decisions for their safety. You don't even know the full extent of the possible ramifications, to make an accurate assessment of the risks/benefits. When that is where you are, you don't know how many kids you might end up losing in the next 10 years. Please make a better decision than that.

If you are a parent, then please don't send your kids back to in-person learning. The risk is too great.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter,
Abi Lancaster