

Dear Unit 5 Superintendent, School Board Members, and Director of Teaching & Learning,

I am writing to address what is happening with the current 2020-2021 school year. While I understand this is not an easy decision and process, there is a need for clarity and for Unit 5 to help parents, teachers, and the community as a whole make the best decision in regards to how to move forward this Fall with either online or face-to-face (F2F) instruction for our children. At the Unit 5 School Board meeting held last Wednesday, July 22, 2020, a plan was voted that provides students with the two options of online and F2F instruction. The plan also shared that the online learning platform being used this year is Edmentum. The [Unit 5 Return to School Plan Q & A document](#) that was posted on the McLean County Unit 5 Facebook page shares that this online program does not meet the needs of students who are enrolled in Honors courses, AP courses, and/ or Dual Credit course programs. Also, this online program does not allow students to meet NCAA Eligibility. There are several students that have IEPs, 504 plans, and/or receive ESL services. This online program does not clearly address how their needs will be met. This is an issue of inequity and a violation of legal rights.

The deadline for parents to respond to whether they would like to send their children to school F2F or use the online learning platform is this Wednesday, July 29th. With the lack of information provided this does not give parents what they need to make a sound decision. As you know COVID-19 is killing thousands of people daily, therefore this situation has to be handled with intelligence and caution. This email is to request the following:

1. An extension on the deadline until the Unit 5 school district has a sound plan of what they will do to make sure each of the learning options is equitable and meets the needs of ALL learners: those F2F, e-learning/online, as well as students that receive special education and ESL services.
2. Unit 5 Superintendent, Director, and School Board Members create an equitable option for students who will be using online platforms. There are several ways this can be done: a) Teachers can livestream from either their homes or classrooms while students sign-in and follow instruction; and b) Unit 5 can create an online classroom community using Canvas or Blackboard which allows teachers to share resources, teach and record themselves, and provide opportunities for discussion and socializing.
3. A clear articulation of who will specifically provide instruction for our students whether F2F or online. All of our children deserve a trained Unit 5 teacher who is knowledgeable of our student population and who is aware of the needs of our children. The current plan states that students who do e-learning will do so via a self paced online curriculum which indicates they will not have trained staff teaching new content. Our children (and most parents) haven't been trained to teach themselves and then evaluate if they have successfully comprehended the material. This is not equitable or fair and parents should not be penalized for deciding that the health of their children is a higher priority than returning to school for F2F instruction.

I am well aware and do understand that there are parents who need to send their children to school because of their need to work or because they need their children to have access to WiFi. I believe there should be an option for these parents to send their children to school and they can access the livestream teaching or online platforms like the other children. Students can be spread out throughout gyms, auditoriums, and other large spaces which will provide the same access as students online to their teachers.

This email is not to argue that ALL children need to be online, however this email is to share that the online platform needs to be equitable and not hinder students from being successful academically or prevent them from obtaining academic scholarships, athletic scholarships, or having the services they need to help them learn.

Please respond back with information about how you will move forward to make this an equitable opportunity for all involved to ensure students have what they need. I am also requesting an extension of the deadline (beyond July 29, 2020) for parents to respond until we receive these additional details which will enable us to make a more informed decision based on factual information.

As a reminder, you do have one of the largest teacher producing institutions at your disposal that trains teachers how to teach and be equitable in the process. Please consider using all resources available to you while making decisions that will ultimately impact our children the most.

Your immediate attention to this matter and a response no later than 12 noon on Wednesday, July 29, 2020 is requested!

Best,

(Insert your Name)