

Public Hearing on Continuity of Learning Plan 4.0
Virtual Special Called School Board Meeting
July 10, 2020
Comments from Lindsay Stuart

Good Afternoon,

My name is Lindsay Stuart and I am an ACPS elementary teacher. In my 11 years in education, and my 8 years in ACPS, I've never felt so strongly the need to advocate for both my, and my students' safety. If we were here today to talk solely about what is the best choice academically, my comments would be vastly different. There's no disagreement that in person education is better. Believe me, I want to be back in my classroom with my kids. However, we don't have the luxury to consider how to reopen our schools solely from an academic perspective this year. If we've learned anything since March it's that no one wins in this pandemic.

COVID cases are still active in our city, state, and nation and experts state continued social distancing, use of masks, and avoiding crowded places are the best ways to lower our risk. ACPS is underfunded and underprepared to return safely in person with the current mandated guidelines.

Opening schools in person creates vectoring and safety concerns for students, staff and their families. Until a vaccine is available or additional funding is secured to create additional jobs, the burden of extra cleaning, cost of PPE, and enforcing social distancing with young children falls solely on the backs of already over-burdened classroom teachers and staff. I'll give you 3 examples:

-In Arizona a teacher died after teaching a virtual summer school program with 2 other teachers in the room, following all CDC guidelines. (https://www.abc15.com/news/state/beloved-gila-county-teacher-passes-away-from-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR2BJk5S8V3Q6X0-I6h0U_1vWtLQoiFkEDQi4dtAINoo9D5qnNDHNYWo0_s)

The other 2 teachers also tested positive. -An in-person pre-k summer school program in Florida closed after a child tested positive and exposed all students and staff. (https://www.news-journalonline.com/news/20200709/volusia-summer-school-student-tests-positive-for-coronavirus-vpk-shuts-down?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=ghf-daytona-Maine)

-And finally, Israel's head of public health stated in testimony to the Israeli parliament that schools—not restaurants or gyms—turned out to be the country's worst mega-infectors behind their massive spike in covid infections. (https://news.yahoo.com/second-wave-covid-hits-israel-162129002.html?soc_src=hl-viewer&soc_trk=fb&guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cDovL20uZmFjZWJvb2suY29t&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAF88GlxKU4MR1u0ok7giECbE43MIGrCfzN2vVviQDyIUK0Jo04u5TVRYZkFHV1B0mhAzNmONyQiywYhmXvy7awXabSYerAN2CDsXfni3Inj5slnIpkx3GOaG6_e78oftkGxhQvKbdCl-yYnY7aMFpL_ah_sUqHJFhZ2e_uR0oB9f6)

Therefore, I see the safest solution is an improved virtual plan for the fall, which also gives us more time to figure out how to open schools in a way that is safe for teachers, students, & families. This plan must be equitable for our students with special education plans such as IEPs, 504s, those receiving special

services, and those without adequate access to internet. I realize the ask here is significant, but the ask should not be the loss or significant impairment of a child, staff member, or family member's life.

Thank you for your time and understanding that we cannot approach this solely through the lens as to only what is best academically.

Lindsay M. Stuart, M.Ed
4th Grade Teacher
George Mason Elementary
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Articles linked above are provided below.

Beloved Gila County teacher passes away from COVID-19



A Gila County teacher has passed away from COVID-19 after working in-person with two other teachers.

By: [Danielle Lerner](#) , Steve Irvin
Posted at 9:50 PM, Jul 08, 2020
and last updated 1:42 AM, Jul 09, 2020

GILA COUNTY, AZ — Family members of Kimberley Chavez Lopez Byrd, who taught in the Hayden-Winkelman Unified School District for more than 30 years, say she passed away from COVID-19 on June 26.

District Superintendent Jeff Gregorich says Byrd was team-teaching an online summer school course in the same room with two other teachers, and despite following all CDC guidelines for social distancing, sanitizing and wearing masks and gloves, all three of the teachers tested positive for COVID-19.

"Kim was a master teacher and a wonderful and loving person. She can never be replaced. Our school staff and community is still grieving," said Gregorich. "We are a small district and she has taught members of almost everyone's family over her 38 years of teaching."

It's a tight-knit teaching community in Gila County, with just three schools, and about 400 students.

"She loved it. She was good at it too," said her son Luke Byrd.

Byrd's family says they do not know for certain where she contracted the virus but said several other family members also tested positive and are currently in quarantine. Her son says she also had a history of lung issues and asthma, making her particularly vulnerable to the virus.

"She was very concerned you know but she was 100% on board with whatever needed to be done," said her husband, Jessie. "She had ordered face shields, masks. She was making masks because she loved to sew."

In just a week of teaching together, the three teachers went through half of a large bottle of hand sanitizer. Kimberley started to feel sick. She was admitted to the hospital on June 13. She tested positive for COVID-19. She died on June 26.

Two days after she entered the hospital, two other teachers also tested positive for COVID-19.

"Fatigue set in. Cough set in. Fever set in. By the weekend it was in full swing and I was very ill," said Jena Martinez, another veteran teacher. Martinez spent four weeks in quarantine. She is still getting breathing treatments, and just tested negative for the first time this week.

Another teacher, Angela Skilling, was on day 27 battling COVID-19 on Wednesday. She is still testing positive. "We have little kids," she said. "How many people did I come in contact with?"

Her fellow educators say they're telling Byrd's story because school districts face increasing pressure from the White House to re-open classrooms on schedule. Educators say it's too soon, and the death of a veteran teacher should serve as a cautionary tale.

"All three teachers religiously followed the CDC social distancing, wore masks, gloves, and were continuously disinfecting throughout each session," Gregorich said. "Unfortunately, these protective CDC strategies did not keep any of them safe."

Governor Ducey has delayed the re-opening of any classroom in Arizona until at least August 17. The governor has said that's an "aspirational" date and could be extended if new closures and mask mandates fail to bring the number of infections down.

A tribute on the district's Facebook page says Byrd was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and a dedicated teacher who was passionate, caring, supportive and vibrant.

See article on next page.

Volusia summer school student tests positive for coronavirus; VPK shuts down

By [Cassidy Alexander](#)
[@bycassidy](#)

Posted Jul 9, 2020 at 5:08 PM Updated Jul 10, 2020 at 4:06 PM

With school set to start in less than six weeks, teachers union president Elizabeth Albert is concerned about the district's ability to contain potential outbreaks during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Volusia County school district shut down the voluntary prekindergarten program at Deltona's Timbercrest Elementary School after a student tested positive for [the coronavirus](#) this week, teachers union president Elizabeth Albert confirmed.

The student fell ill less than a week into the program, and Albert is concerned the district's response was not as thorough or organized as it needs to be as it prepares to welcome thousands of students back to campuses in August.

In a program of five students, three were sick with symptoms that have been associated with COVID-19, although at this time Albert only knew of one student who had tested positive. Students are still attending the VPK program on the east side of the county.

Volusia County Schools spokeswoman Kelly Schulz said in a statement that the district cannot discuss specific student or staff health issues, citing privacy laws.

She did confirm that the VPK program at Timbercrest has been canceled for the rest of the summer.

After speaking with teachers and district officials, Albert explained to The News-Journal what happened at the school.

The VPK program started at the school last week, on June 29. The student in question attended school for two days, and then did not return because of an ear infection. By Monday, the parents notified the school that the student had tested positive for COVID-19.

That day, another student stayed home because of vomiting. And a third student came to school wearing a mask and teachers later learned the student had a runny nose. So on Monday, two sick students were absent. The other three parents were notified of the positive case as they dropped students off, and chose to still send their children to school.

Later that morning, custodians deep-cleaned the classroom while children were at recess, and that's when teachers found out the third student had a runny nose. At that point, the child was isolated and shortly after that the remaining students were sent home.

The teachers and principal at the school were notified they had to quarantine for 14 days, Albert said, but were not ordered to get tested for the coronavirus.

Albert said clerical staff were not required to quarantine and the front office was not deep-cleaned. And there was initially confusion about whether the teachers would get paid for the multi-week VPK program. In the end they were only paid for time they had worked.

“I think it’s a wake-up call to us all that this is a very serious situation that we do not control the variables around,” Albert said. “The only thing that we really can do is have a good solid plan on how to respond if and when the situation presents itself again.”

If a student presents with symptoms related to COVID-19 — which the district defines as fever above 100.4 or chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea and vomiting or diarrhea — the student or staff member will be taken to an isolated area. The individual will be asked to wear a mask until they leave campus.

A school nurse or health care provider will stay with sick students until they are picked up. And clinic staff would immediately notify school administrators and Health Services. The school administrators would request cleaning of the affected areas.

In the event of a positive COVID-19 case, the Volusia County school district’s protocol is to immediately notify the Department of Health, which will help the superintendent, school administrator and nursing coordinator determine a course of action. At that time, it’s possible students and most staff would be dismissed for two to five days, to allow health officials to understand the situation and determine next steps, including whether an extended dismissal is needed. Those decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Albert believes the protocol isn’t detailed enough.

“Ask five different people who work for the district what the protocol is and you’d probably get five different answers,” she said. “We don’t do a very good job as a district of communicating even on our best day, so in a situation like this we have to be very purposeful and communicate explicitly with the intent that everybody understands what we do.”

The Volusia County school district will release its health and safety protocols for reopening school at a special meeting on Wednesday.

As local officials try to establish what’s safe, politicians and public health experts are clashing over the very same topic at the national level.

President Donald Trump’s administration announced Wednesday that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would be revising its guidance for schools that plan to reopen, but today the CDC denied it would be revising the guidance.

The first day of school in Volusia will be the week of Aug. 17, less than six weeks away.

See article on next page.

‘The Second Wave’ of COVID Hits Israel Like a Tsunami

Noga Tarnopolsky, [The Daily Beast](#) • July 8, 2020
Gali Tibbon/Pool via Reuters

JERUSALEM—Like beachgoers informed there is no danger just before a tsunami hits, Israelis are stunned by the magnitude of the dramatic turn in their fortune. In under six weeks, they’ve gone from model nation fighting the novel coronavirus to a small, isolated country whose citizens face a long, deadly summer locked down.

On May 17, Israel reported only 10 new cases of COVID-19 in the entire country. It looked like Israel had succeeded in subduing the coronavirus crisis with a lockdown enforced early and strictly, reemerging on the other side with only 271 dead.

Announcing the imminent reopening of restaurants and pubs, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who usually sticks to a formal manner, beamed and told Israelis to “go out and enjoy yourselves.”

The prime minister, who was indicted late last year and had failed to win enough votes to form a right-wing government in three successive electoral campaigns, was basking not only in his internationally applauded success against the virus, but in having remained head of government. After 18 months of political limbo, he’d been able to cobble together a team-of-rivals coalition with former opponent Benny Gantz, a centrist retired army chief of staff.

That government, Netanyahu promised, would focus only on the “corona emergency” for its first six months.

With Israelis under virtual house arrest and the number of patients under control, Netanyahu spent much of April boasting about his mastery of virus management.

“Israel is the safest country on earth,” he crowed at one of his prime time live appearances, citing statistics published by an unknown website, the Deep Knowledge Group.

Speaking to the [pro-Netanyahu freebie newspaper *Israel Hayom*](#), “associates of the prime minister” said that Israel got top marks thanks to “the strict steps promoted by the prime minister.”

“Israel is ranked first among the safest countries in the world. The over-preparation, in which it is a leader, is justified, and that has resulted in Israel leading among western countries,” the outlet cited one associate saying.

Jump to July, when cases of COVID-19 are spiking, putting Israel high on the list of countries who’ve lost control of the virus’ contagion; the economy is cratering, with unemployment at about 23 percent, and the new government is on the verge of collapse.

What happened?

If you ask Dr. Siegal Sadetzki, the head of the nation's public health service, who served as an Israeli Dr. Anthony Fauci for the past six months and quit her job on Tuesday, the government "has lost its compass."

"Israel is heading to a dangerous place," she wrote in an 8,000-word indictment of the government's failure to prepare in any way for a resurgence of illness.

"Despite systematic and repeated warnings through various channels, and discussions in several forums, we are watching with frustration as the hourglass of opportunities runs low," she warned.

"I have come to the conclusion that in the newly created conditions under which my professional opinion is not accepted—I can no longer help to effectively cope with the spread of the virus."

All this may sound familiar to Americans in the many states where the virus infections are now spiking. But ... it gets worse.

During the six wasted weeks, the period singled out by Sadetzki, schools were chaotically reopened and then, as infections soared, re-shuttered. Parents were unable to foresee reentering the workforce. The public was instructed to wear masks—but no system of enforcement was put into place. The lists of permitted and prohibited activities shifted daily, with little or no explanation. While Netanyahu actively pursued his (since scuttled) dream of annexing significant parts of the occupied West Bank, the number of Israelis diagnosed with COVID-19 multiplied by 499 percent.

Ashdod, a city on the Mediterranean coast, emerged as a top locus of infection, but no Israeli official could explain why the breezy, fun beach town, where citizens live outdoors during the summer, gained almost 700 COVID-19 patients during the month of June.

Criticizing the government's "hesitant response," Ran Balicer, a professor of public health and a member of Israel's national Epidemic Management Team, said in an interview that "no place on earth has seen a spike in morbidity [the disease rate] like Israel's."

Tuesday was Israel's worst day of contagion, with 1,400 new cases of COVID-19 announced, a record since the start of the outbreak.

Event spaces, bars, and gyms have been re-shut but instructions regarding public transportation remain unclear, and the transport and finance ministers squabble on the airwaves.

On Tuesday, in testimony to the Israeli parliament, Dr. Udi Kliner, Sadetzki's deputy, reported that schools—not restaurants or gyms—turned out to be the country's worst mega-infectors.

(Again, this should be of interest to Americans who have been told by a [presidential tweet](#) in all caps that "SCHOOLS MUST OPEN IN THE FALL!!!")

The disastrous resurgence of the disease is having major political consequences.

On Wednesday, the Knesset, Israel's parliament, was thrown into pandemonium when legislators allied with Netanyahu floated a bill which would have created "a national committee of inquiry to investigate judges' conflicts of interest," a naked attempt to throw into question Netanyahu's trial, which opened May 24 and is scheduled to resume on July 19.

He faces charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in a spate of corruption cases.

One-time rival Gantz, who serves as “alternative prime minister” in the rickety six-week-old government, reacted by accusing Netanyahu’s party, the Likud, of “sabotaging Israeli democracy.”

The vote failed, but the government’s longevity is being put to the test.

The little-noticed reappearance of Netanyahu’s former chief-of-staff, Natan Eshel, may be the most potent metaphor for Israel’s precipitous six week decline.

Eshel, a longtime Netanyahu confidant, resigned in 2012 after he was accused of threatening and harassing a female aide in the prime minister’s office, more specifically, of surreptitiously photographing her beneath her skirt.

While rarely seen in public, he is known to remain close to the prime minister.

On Wednesday, [Eshel blasted journalists with a text message blaming the public for Netanyahu’s travails](#). “A high percentage of the public isn’t obeying instructions to wear a mask, is partying in clubs and on rooftops, at the beach and in other public places, is responsible for this situation,” Eshel wrote.

Focusing his wrath on small business owners, who have been prominent in anti-Netanyahu protests in recent weeks and whose businesses are collapsing as Israel’s usable income vanishes, Eshel claimed “the government wanted to help—but they didn’t obey the rules. And now all of us will pay the economic and personal price for it.”

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin wasn’t having it. Speaking to Israeli army officers graduating from Israel’s National Defense College, he said that Israel has not developed a clear and coherent doctrine to combat the coronavirus. “We do not have one body in which the knowledge, the effort, the management, the authority, and messaging to the public is concentrated.”

When it looked like Israel was winning the fight against the virus, in fact, Prime Minister Netanyahu wanted to embody that effort. Now, the resurgence of the plague is all the fault of the people.