Dear Mehlville Board of Education,

The Mehlville NEA would like to express our concerns regarding the Mehlville School District’s plan to reopen schools this fall. Returning to in-person instruction is a dangerous prospect that threatens the lives of our students, staff, and community. After surveying the Mehlville staff, it is our overwhelming conclusion and position that we must delay in-person instruction until we can minimize the threat to the safety and protect the long-term health of our students, staff, and the Mehlville community. The Mehlville School District’s Board of Education met remotely on July 16th, 2020, for their own personal safety, yet they considered a plan that may include students and staff to gather in large groups and resume in-person instruction. We demand the District prioritize the safety of students, staff, and community by following a phased plan for reopening:

I. Virtual learning through at least the first grading term with reevaluation based on community health data as related to COVID-19
II. Beginning in the second grading term, the District adopts a blended model of students attending in-person instruction part time; contingent on improving community health data as related to COVID-19
III. Full in-person instruction beginning in the third quarter; contingent on improving community health data as related to COVID-19

We acknowledge that some in our community desire in-person instruction, and teachers know that instruction is most effective when delivered in-person. We further acknowledge that there are legislative barriers that complicate creating remote learning structures. However, it remains our position that the health and safety of our students and staff must be our number one priority. Saint Louis County has not met criteria to move past a Phase 1 Reopening based on CDC recommendations. Just this past week, Saint Louis County Executive, Sam Page, rolled back the reopening of youth sports in our community after student athletes and staff became infected with COVID-19, a clear signal from our local government that we’ve moved too quickly in allowing people to gather. Instead of a decrease in cases, we are witnessing a dangerous surge that will most undoubtedly be exacerbated if we hold school in-person next month.

We understand that the decision to return to school depends on many factors, and no one is more eager to return to our classrooms with our beloved students, but community health and safety must remain the number one priority. Like never before, your decisions will determine life or death for our students and staff. We ask that you make these decisions as if it depends on your own life and that of your family members. We are calling on the Mehlville School Board to make the right decision: we cannot return to in-person instruction knowing that we will sacrifice the life of even one student or staff member.

Yours in education,

Mehlville NEA Leadership

Deana McKelvie, President

Dan Regan, Vice President

Marge Meier, Treasurer

Elizabeth Swope, Secretary

Jessica Smith, Membership Chair

Sarah Regan, Communications Chair

Kyle Farely, PR&R Co-Chair

Kim Hinkamp, PR&R Co-Chair

Deana McKelvie

Dan Regan

Marge Meier

Elizabeth Swope

Jessica Smith

Sarah Regan

Kyle Farely

Kim Hinkamp
Overview: What will school look like in 2020-2021?

What will school look like in August and throughout the 2020-2021 school year? What are my child’s options? How is my child going to be kept safe? We understand that Mehlville School District families and staff have many questions regarding our return to school for the fall semester. Through parent and staff feedback, the work of our Return to School Committee, as well as continued guidance from the St. Louis County Department of Public Health, we are preparing to safely reopen Mehlville schools for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Mehlville School District families have two choices to make. They can select on-campus instruction with COVID-19 safety protocols in place or full-time virtual instruction through Mehlville@Home. Parents who choose on-campus instruction should understand that depending on the prevalence of COVID-19 in the community, on-campus instruction may pivot to a staggered attendance schedule with blended learning opportunities (at home and at school) or to virtual learning. **We will not be making a decision about what on-campus instruction will look like (following Plan A, Plan B and Plan C illustrated below) until closer to the first day of school.**

Parents have the choice between On-Campus instruction and Mehlville@Home.
Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

Mehlville School District

Mehlville On-Campus

- In-person instruction on campus at all 19 schools
- Procedures in place to reduce risk of transmission of COVID-19, including social distancing where possible
- Depending on community spread of COVID-19, instruction may pivot to virtual instruction or a staggered schedule to allow greater social distancing.

A: At School

- In-person instruction will occur on campus at all 19 schools.
- Procedures are in place to reduce risk of transmission of COVID-19, including social distancing where possible.

B: Blended

- On any given day, half of the student body will attend school on campus and half will learn at home.
- New curriculum will be taught.
- Family groups would attend school on the same days.

C: Connected

- Students will connect online with their teachers on a defined schedule.
- New curriculum will be taught.
- Students will be assessed as if they are in-person.

Mehlville@Home

- Mehlville@Home is a fully virtual school option for students in grades K-12.
- Students receive personalized learning opportunities from the safety of their homes.
- Families who register a child are committing to an entire semester of virtual learning.

Learn more and register: bit.ly/mehlvilleathomemsdr9

Learn more about On-Campus instruction.

Learn more about Mehlville@Home.
Our return to school plans will be released July 20 (July 6, 2020)
There has been media coverage about guidelines on returning to school from a task force of area school superintendents and public health officials. These guidelines serve as recommendations for school districts to consider when developing their individual plans for returning to school in August. We will be releasing our detailed return to school plan the week of July 20.

Parent survey results (July 2, 2020)
Thank you, parents, for completing the Return to School survey. Mehlville School District leaders are using these results to shape our return to school plan, which will be released the week of July 20. See the survey results.

An update on our return to school in August (June 24, 2020)
Our Return to School Committee, which includes teachers, principals and administrators, is planning for a variety of scenarios so we can best prepare to provide school in-person, virtually, or maybe a hybrid of both, depending on guidance from St. Louis County Health.

During our planning, we are considering the feedback our parents, teachers and community provided in our ThoughtExchange on returning to school (see the results of the exchange here). The top thoughts centered around cleaning and sanitizing our learning spaces, followed by keeping sick children and staff at home, and how we can physically distance.

Our return to school plan will include heightened levels of cleaning, additional times for students and staff to wash their hands, physical distancing where possible, and guidance on the use of personal protective equipment, like face coverings. Mehlville School District will be closely following the recommendations of the St. Louis County Public Health Department.

More information will be shared with parents the week of July 20. We appreciate your patience during this time of uncertainty.
Our district budget remains sound
First, our budget is in good shape for now. During state and county stay-at-home orders, our economy slowed down significantly. As a result of a reduction in sales tax, the closure of casinos, and an extension of the tax deadline from April 15 to July 15, our revenue from state and local sources is less than what we anticipated it to be. Due to state budget shortfalls, we received less state funding in the month of June than we anticipated, and we are expecting a similar withholding in July. That said, our financial outlook remains positive. That's because we've worked hard over the past few years to build up cash reserves. While we anticipate spending more than our revenue sources next year, our cash reserves will provide the cushion we need to weather this pandemic year without cutting any programs or services.

What will school look like in August?
I wish I could provide you with that answer today, but there remain too many unknowns to predict what school will look like on our first day, Aug. 25, 2020. Our Return to School Committee has been working since April to plan for a variety of scenarios. The committee has provided the framework of what instruction would look like if all students return to our buildings, if we have staggered attendance to allow for any social distancing requirements, or if it's not safe to return to buildings and students engage in e-learning either temporarily or for an extended period of time. Currently, our principals are working on detailed operational plans to minimize risk of coronavirus infection. We will be sharing all of these plans with parents the week of July 20.

We have made a few decisions regarding our return to school that I can share with you today:
- Our decisions will be based primarily on guidance from the St. Louis County Department of Public Health.
- Students will continue to take their Chromebooks home.
- We will not be buying additional buses to allow for greater social distancing.
- If we have to stagger our attendance so that only half of students will attend at any one time, we will not split attendance by morning and afternoon. Having half of our students attend in the morning while the other half attend in the afternoon presents transportation challenges and would not provide us enough time to thoroughly clean between attendance groups.
- If we have to stagger attendance, family groups will be on the same schedule.

What's next?
We have reached a point where in order to continue planning, we need more feedback from you. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey on return-to-school options and Mehlville@Home.

>> Take the survey. [The survey is now closed.]

We don't know what the impact of COVID-19 will be in the fall, and guidance from public health officials changes frequently. However, I'm optimistic that by July 20, we will have a solid plan to educate our community's children in a continuing pandemic. Thank you to the teachers and administrators who are working throughout the summer to create these plans for robust learning
and safe operations. Thank you for your patience and grace as we continue to work together for the safety of our community.

Sincerely,

Chris Gaines, Ed.D.
Superintendent

**A new type of school: Mehlville@Home**

Mehlville School District will open a virtual school in August 2020, called Mehlville@Home, for students in grades K-12. Students must enroll and commit to Mehlville@Home for at least one semester at a time. Teachers will provide engaging instruction and learning opportunities through this virtual school. Families at high risk for serious illness from COVID-19 may choose this option for their student; however, we want to emphasize that this program is for any student who would like to enroll in Mehlville School District and learn in a virtual setting. We plan to continue to offer Mehlville@Home even after the pandemic is behind us.

The district hosted a series of parent meetings to discuss Mehlville@Home. You can view the information here:

**Elementary School Parent Information:**

![Elementary School Mehlville@Home](image1)

**Middle School Parent Information:**

![Middle School Mehlville@Home](image2)
What will my HS student learn in Mehlville@Home?

- Students will have access to English and Social Studies with a Mehlville School District certified teacher.
- Students will have access to Science, Math, Career Exploration, Health, Art, Music, and Experiential opportunities taught by a Mehlville certified teacher or through another platform such as Launch or Edpenuity.
Preparing for students' return in August (June 22, 2020)

Mehlville School District leaders are working throughout the summer to prepare for our students’ return to school and learning in August. Our goal is to provide high-quality instruction and learning opportunities in a clean and safe environment for students and staff.

Our Return to School Committee, which includes teachers, principals and administrators, is planning for a variety of scenarios so we can best prepare to provide school in-person, virtually, or maybe a hybrid of both, depending on guidance from St. Louis County Health.

During our planning, we are considering the feedback our parents, teachers and community provided in our ThoughtExchange on returning to school (see the results of the exchange here). The top thoughts centered around cleaning and sanitizing our learning spaces, followed by keeping sick children and staff at home, and how we can physically distance.

Our return to school plan will include heightened levels of cleaning, additional times for students and staff to wash their hands, physical distancing where possible, and guidance on the use of personal protective equipment, like face coverings. Mehlville School District will be closely following the recommendations of the St. Louis County Public Health Department.

More information will be shared with parents the week of July 20. We appreciate your patience during this time of uncertainty.