

September 18, 2020

To the Norman Public Schools District Administration, Norman High School Administration, and broader Norman High community:

Eight school days ago, we began in-person instruction to our Norman High School students. Despite the best efforts of staff and building administrators, despite broad student compliance with mask mandates and social distancing, despite crucial parental support, we find ourselves exactly where many feared we would be: watching as COVID spreads among our student and staff population.

What is unfortunate is this predictable outcome. Many of us have urged our district throughout the summer and school opening to involve teachers in the planning and preparation for the 2020 school year. As individuals we have:

- Worked with our departments and departmental administrators
- Written our school board members, district administrators, building administrators
- Spoken at the school board meetings
- Invited district administrators to hear our concerns
- Filed formal grievances
- Raised concerns in planning documents by administration

These appeals have fallen on deaf ears. Instead, the district chose not to include any classroom teachers on the Back-to-School Task Force so planning was left to a group composed largely of business representatives and district administration.

Now, we have **fundamental concerns** that must be addressed before we as a staff feel we can safely return to work with students in the building.

1. We are concerned about the safety and health of our students and fellow staff members.
 - After only four days of in-person instruction, one third of our staff was in quarantine and a shortage of substitutes meant multiple classes were housed in the auditorium and gyms. There is no way to contact trace these classes. The district is aware of this practice, as it is still on-going. We strongly disagree with this practice. It is placing our students and staff at an increased risk of exposure.
2. We are concerned that the quickly growing numbers of positive cases have overwhelmed our capacity to contact trace.
 - This has led to delays in notification of families and staff. Additionally, the district has decided not to notify all the students in a class with a positive case. This has denied families and staff the crucial information needed to determine whether school is safe.
3. We are concerned about a lack of staffing by privately-operated custodial and substitute agencies.
 - The level of cleaning promised is not happening at our site. Additionally, the substitute coverage promised by Kelly Services has been wholly inadequate to meet our school's needs.
4. We are concerned that the shifting policies by the district have left students, staff, and parents confused, and thus have put more people at risk of exposure.
 - Policies have shifted regarding:

- i. Leave and quarantining protocols--currently only individuals in “close contact” are notified but this was not the expectation when parents enrolled students and when staff decided to return. Additionally, many staff are being told when they have a positive case in a class, they are not required to test or limit contact unless they meet the 6 foot/15 min requirement for “close contact”--this could lead to cross-contamination between staff members, classes, and groups in the alternate schedule.
- ii. Procedure for moving from in-person to remote with rising COVID numbers
- iii. Virtual learning expectations for students and teachers

While we are in remote learning, we will have the opportunity to put policies into place that can address many of these concerns. Before we return to in-person instruction we must see the following:

1. The district must truly provide “Enhanced sanitizing,” including:
 - Desks wiped with CDC-approved cleaner each night
 - High touch areas wiped multiple times during the day
 - Rooms with a positive case must receive some visible confirmation of cleaning protocol having been completed
 - Accountability measures put into place to ensure cleaning occurs
2. The district and building administration must provide daily communication with parents and staff regarding positive cases among students and/or staff that includes the number of new positive cases confirmed that day. This information needs to be entered into Infinite Campus in a uniform manner so that all teachers who should know can easily know if a student is out because of COVID quarantine or having tested positive.
3. The district must properly employ and train individuals to perform contact tracing with systematic data entry and protocols
4. The district must comply with federal guidelines related to COVID-related leave and provide teachers who have been informed that a student in their class has tested positive to take time off, that isn’t personal sick leave, to get tested and quarantine until a negative result is returned.
5. The district and building administration must re-design protocols for instances where multiple classes must be reassigned due to sub shortages. These protocols must include: seating charts, attendance, spacing, mask wearing.

First and foremost we owe the Norman High community, who has long supported our efforts to provide the best education in the state to every student who enters our building, a safe place to send their children. We want our students to be in the building and to be able to engage with them on their education journey, but the safety of our school community comes first and always will.

Sincerely,

Ninety Members of the Norman High Faculty & Staff