



MORRIS JEFF UNITED EDUCATORS

Dear Superintendent Lewis and NOLA-PS Board Members,

Today we are writing to share our concerns about when and how we will resume in-person learning. We support the decision that NOLA-PS made to pivot to distance learning the week of January 4th. However, even in the short time of in-person learning (Jan. 4 - 5), Morris Jeff Community School experienced our first case of in-class, student-to-student COVID-19 transmission.

Many elementary classrooms are nearly back to full capacity. Classes may have 20 to 25 students in addition to lead teachers, one-on-one student aids, and special education teachers--all in-person, all day. We fear that had we not returned to distance learning when we did, the community outbreak would have caused many more student-to-student, student-to-staff, or staff-to-student transmissions. **It is for this reason that we ask NOLA-PS to maintain distance learning until CDC-supported thresholds show it is truly safe to return to our school buildings.**

We also ask for NOLA-PS to follow clear, CDC-supported thresholds for pivoting between in-person learning and distance learning. This must include transparency about how these decisions are made. The metrics that account for the safety of our school communities have thus far been fluid and unclear. Uncertainty regarding these thresholds has led to heightened anxieties and confusion about when it is actually safe to be in-person. The lack of clear thresholds also makes it difficult for families and school staff to make plans. We repeatedly find ourselves scrambling in response to seemingly last-minute announcements.

We believe NOLA-PS should maintain the CDC-supported thresholds released at the start of the 2020-2021 school year:

- 1. Fewer than 50 cases over a rolling 14 day period.**
- 2. A community positivity rate of less than 5%.**
- 3. Robust and fast testing capacity.**
- 4. Full distance learning anytime the city is in any version of Phase 1.**

Based on our experiences teaching in-person during the pandemic, we believe that closely adhering to the CDC guidelines and thresholds is key to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in schools, especially in the lower grades. Our city is now dealing with the new, more contagious variant of COVID-19. This, combined with the current increase of positive cases among children globally, indicates that it is not yet safe to return fully to in-person learning. The two days we were back in-person show that when Orleans Parish is in an active outbreak, our schools are not safe face-to-face learning or working environments.

We encourage the board to give teachers, families, and students a meaningful voice in the planning process moving forward. We can collaborate and problem-solve to create learning models that are safe and workable for our entire community. We are stronger and safer when we work together.

Thank you for your time,

Morris Jeff United Educators