

## Alexander, Kerry

---

**From:** Foley, Lea <lfoley@\_\_\_\_\_>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 16, 2021 11:06 AM  
**To:** Alexander, Kerry  
**Subject:** Assistance needed  
**Attachments:** School committee letter 2.docx; letter board of health.docx

Hi Kerry,

I was wondering if you could share 2 letters to the Health Board?

I wrote a new letter for tomorrow night's school committee, explaining how the Dr. Janice Adie Day school feels about returning to in person learning before the vaccine is available to teachers.

I also attached the letter to the school committee from January. I had intended to send the letter to Jo Ann Keegan but was given miss-information and sent it to Joanne Belanger. I believe that the information in both letters is valuable to the Board.

I would greatly appreciate if you could forward both letters to Jo Ann Keegan, Lisa Golden, William J Galvin III MD, Erin Gendron, Kathleen Cullen-Lutter as well as yourself.

Thank you

Nurse Lea

[Lea Foley RN BSN NCSN](#)

Dr. Janice Adie Day School

\_\_\_\_\_ Street

Chelmsford MA 01824

Phone-978-\_\_\_\_\_

Fax- 978-\_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to you as a school nurse working for Lowell Public Schools. I am a full-time nurse at the Dr. Janice Adie Day School which is a substantially separate day school for students with autism. The students in this program demonstrate intensive needs. As a result, they require staff to remain in close proximity for student safety and to prompt them through their daily learning activities. I wanted to share COVID data with you from our program in the hope that it would assist you in the determination of when the students of substantially separate programs could return to in-person learning.

The students in our program had the option of full in person learning since the first day of school, September 17, 2020. As a result, we had a total of **85** physical bodies (including staff and students combined) present in the building between September 17th and December 16th when the district shifted to full remote. During this time, the program worked to develop and adhered to the COVID guidelines outlined by the state and health department. Every Thursday, I counted all the PPE and submitted totals/needs to the school department via google form. As a result, staff and students had access to needed PPE equipment. All staff had/have their own face shields as well as an unlimited supply of gowns and gloves. The program has plenty of disposable masks available as replacements for soiled/broken masks or if students did not arrive at school with a mask. In addition, I sewed 200 cloth masks. School/autism themed ones for staff and fun prints in 3 sizes for the students. We also, ordered by individual purchase, masks with the school name, colors and mascot. As a result, we were a well masked group.

Between September 17th and December 16th our COVID data was:

-First staff member positive: 12/3/20

-First student positive: 11/4/20

-Total number of positive staff members: **2**

-Total number of students positive: **5 \***

(\*2 students are siblings living in the same household and share the same class/cohort)

I am happy to report that all of the above positive cases contracted the virus from the community, not from the program. I acted as the tracer for all of our close contacts and there was no transmission to any other staff or students in the program. Also, two of the positive cases did not have any close contacts within the program as they were isolated at home and did not enter the program during their infectious phase.

Prior to the shift to remote learning 82% of our students opted to participate in in person learning. As of last week, only 24% of the students participated in online learning. There has continued to be a decrease in student participation since we shifted to remote learning on December 16. Unfortunately, the student's autism and unique learning needs makes remote learning impossible for most of our students.

I realize that returning to school is a difficult decision. I am hoping that the data from our school will be valuable. I am looking forward to the return to in-person learning as soon as it is deemed safe for all.

Lea

I would like to dispute to the recent push for a delay of in person return until the teachers are vaccinated. First, I would like to tell you what that would mean for the students, parents and staff of the Adie Day School. Our parents are not a vocal group as they are focused on the care of their child with autism and their families. If you were to look at the autism check list on our student's IEPs you would see the services needed to address the many needs of our students. All of these interventions and goals especially those of communication, behavioral and activities of daily living require hands on/ face to face interventions. It is no surprise to us that only a handful of the 53 students are fully able to participate in remote learning. No method of online creativity can replace face to face learning for our students. (trust me we have tried) Our parents have been struggling to support their child at home with little success. They are reporting that the children are frustrated and in several cases have become aggressive towards their parents. We have had many parents calling and crying for return to school and discussing out of district possibilities.

As we all know recent CDC and DESE guidelines call for the return to school with mitigation measures in place especially in areas of low community transmission without the need for teachers to be vaccinated. Our school as well as those around the state regardless of transmission numbers have seen little to no transmission of COVID in schools. In fact the special needs population of Lowell had no transmission of COVID during summer school and the Adie Day had no transmission and a low number of cases from September to December's closure. In fact, we had 2 students that were the only person in their large family units not to get COVID.

I believe that the lack of transmission in our school is due to the commitment of the school department and the city. The development of policies in a collaborative manor, commitment to follow through with developed plans and communication with our families has been understated. The Adie school has all that it needs to provide for mitigation of COVID. PPE supplies and cleaning have been excellent. Our students did a great job wearing masks and if they are unable staff has a face shield to use as part of new DESE guidelines. We managed maintain 6-foot distance or used PPE for direct close interactions and were rewarded with no transmission.

In terms of the CDC concern of districts with high (red) community spread increasing the potential of COVID, I feel that other guidelines in place counteract this. I have listened to the MA state MAVIN weekly webinars since December. What I have learned is that MA has an absolutely amazing ability/commitment to identify, trace and support cases and close contacts. The state is aware of variants and are working hard to identify and study them. I have reviewed recent professional studies of children in schools which verify that children have fewer symptoms and are not responsible for transmission to adults or other children.

Because children have fewer symptoms there is some concern of asymptomatic transmission. This is why I am excited that Lowell has made the commitment to pool testing. I feel that this method of surveillance will be able to identify early and asymptomatic cases which will further protect our staff, students and families. I have attended several CIC webinars and question and answer sessions. I feel confident that all students including the Adie day students will be able to participate in this program. As far as vaccination of staff, I feel that this is an added prevention not a necessary ingredient to the return to school. The truth is that vaccines lower your chance of getting sick and severe symptoms, but it does not replace simple mitigation practices. Wearing masks will need to continue even after a majority of people are vaccinated. Handwashing, social distance and cleaning will never be wrong. The spread of COVID is not from our children but occurs when adults do not follow mitigation measures.

I request that you put our children first and have them return to school where the mitigation measures and pool testing will keep them safe to learn.

**Alexander, Kerry**

---

**From:** Sherley Thom <\_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 15, 2021 8:22 AM  
**To:** Alexander, Kerry  
**Subject:** Teachers must be vaccinated

Good morning,

Please forward my email to all board of health people. In

I expect that teachers, who have been covering all bases with remote teaching during the pandemic, will be able to be fully vaccinated before they return to teaching at the school. It is entirely foreseeable that an outbreak of the mutant viruses could occur this spring.

I am most concerned about contracting one of the mutant viruses proven to be 50-70% more contagious and more deadly in some cases. I have an older family member living in my home and my exposure could jeopardize them.

Please wait until it is safe. I am very proud of my students, their progress and the work we have done to create a successful remote learning environment, and we are doing very well at it.

It is not worth the public health risk that these mutant viruses pose to enforce a return before the risk to teachers is completely neutralized by vaccination.

Sherley Blood Thom  
Lowell High School

## **Alexander, Kerry**

---

**From:** MICHAEL COONEY <\_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 15, 2021 5:07 PM  
**To:** Leahy, John; hclark@lowell.k12.ma.us; adescoteaux@lowell.k12.ma.us; mdillonjr@lowell.k12.ma.us; jadoherty@lowell.k12.ma.us; rhoey@lowell.k12.ma.us; cmartin@lowell.k12.ma.us  
**Cc:** UTL495 Communications; Alexander, Kerry  
**Subject:** Vaccines

Dear Lowell Public School Committee Members,

Mayor John Leahy, Hilary Clark, Andy Descoteaux, Mike Dillon, Jr., Jackie Doherty, Robert Hoey, Connie Martin

First of all, I would like you to know how much I have enjoyed teaching the children of Lowell for the past 25 plus years. I have been working as a special education teacher in small groups and inclusion model the entire time and continue to love my job. I never would have imagined a situation like we are going through right now with COVID wreaking havoc on our schools and community. I realize the importance of getting students back to school for in-person learning and especially the students with disabilities that I am responsible for educating. I would like nothing more than to return back to work in front of students and even signed up to work in-person this school year. While teaching in-person this past September and October I took many risks when consoling younger students struggling emotionally as well as educationally because standing six feet from them just wasn't working; Some students repeatedly removed their masks. I would come home some days hoping and praying I did not contract COVID and bring it home with me. On March 1, I will be back in the classroom with the students. If the current plan stays in effect however the risks I will be taking do not just impact me but those I will come in contact with outside of school including students' families as well as my immediate family. Like many Americans, my family has sacrificed so much this past year, limiting social contact with family and friends, canceling vacations and traveling, and even holiday gatherings. So far we have managed to avoid contracting the virus. Governor Baker has asked us to refrain from gathering in groups, especially indoors, and to not gather with people outside of our immediate families. So my question is why is it okay for me to return back to in-person teaching without being vaccinated when I will be working in four different classrooms with up to 20 students each plus educators when I have not gathered with anyone outside my immediate household the last 10 months. Please, Please, Please do all you can to get educators and school personnel vaccinated as soon as possible.

cc Health Board, and Governor Baker.

**Alexander, Kerry**

---

**From:** bjrbeau <\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 15, 2021 6:24 PM  
**To:** Alexander, Kerry  
**Subject:** Opening Lowell Public Schools

Hello Ms. Alexander, can you please forward the following message to the Lowell Board Of Health members:

Thank you for all you have done to inform the Lowell School Committee and Superintendent of Schools in regards to the dangerously high levels of COVID-19 infections in our area. It seems the School leaders are still obsessed with bringing students and staff into our buildings despite the fact that very few teachers have been vaccinated thus far. I'm hoping you can continue to lead the way towards a safe school reopening, as it seems the Board of Health is the only agency that understands what a pandemic is. Thank you, and please keep up the good work, Brigitte Beauchesne

## Alexander, Kerry

---

**From:** Dan Murphy <\_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 16, 2021 10:44 AM  
**To:** Leahy, John; hclark@lowell.k12.ma.us; adescoteaux@lowell.k12.ma.us;  
mdillonjr@lowell.k12.ma.us; jadoherty@lowell.k12.ma.us; rhoey@lowell.k12.ma.us;  
cmartin@lowell.k12.ma.us; Alexander, Kerry  
**Cc:** utl@utlowell495.org  
**Subject:** Re-Opening Schools

I am a teacher at Lowell High School. Re-opening schools is dangerous for students and teachers. I am high-risk for covid because I have had a double lung transplant and therefore have a suppressed immune system so that my body does not reject my donor lungs. Contracting covid could be fatal for me, so if the decision is made to force teachers back to school then I will have to consider using sick days to keep myself alive.

The number of Americans who have died is horrifying. I do not intend to be one of them. Forcing students and teachers into unsafe school buildings is criminal, and I hope someday that those responsible for ill-advised decisions during the pandemic are held accountable.

Dan Murphy