



OEA Members,

We are deeply disappointed in the way OPS has moved forward with plans to attempt a return to normalcy in our school buildings. The district plan to return to five-day-a-week teaching of all children could – and should – have had coordination and collaboration but instead included neither.

In a conference call with OPS leadership this morning, we told the superintendent and other administrators that “OEA is in favor of a return of students, but only after the staff receives the vaccine.”

In our view, it is *absolutely imperative* that OPS educators and staff are vaccinated before we return to greeting, teaching and caring for all of our students each and every day. Without vaccinated educators and staff, every school day at every OPS school building becomes a potential virus super-spreader event.

Many of our members are older or have health issues that put them at high risk. Some live with a spouse or loved one who is at high risk of contracting the virus. While educators are anxious for teaching and learning to return to normal, they are not ready to needlessly risk their lives, the lives of loved ones or the lives of our students and their families to do so.

It must be noted that we are quite far from “back to normal.” As of Jan. 9, Douglas County was still at 34.7 percent test positivity rate, nearly seven times the 5 percent positivity rate national health experts and the WHO say a state or region should maintain for two weeks before lifting shelter-at-home and social distancing protocols. That positivity rate is a key metric in determining whether the virus spread is under control.

Additionally, there are nearly 62,000 vaccines sitting on freezer shelves in Nebraska. Along with the elderly, health care and other essential workers, teachers who are asked to be in a school setting with all students five days a week should be at the

top of the priority list for those doses of the vaccine that are on hand, or those doses that are in transit to Nebraska. In our discussions with OPS, and despite the administration's protestations that scheduling the vaccinations "is out of the hands of OPS administration," we urge district leaders to coordinate with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to make those doses available to educators and staff at the earliest opportunity – and before staff return to full-time, in-person instruction with all students. That timeline is an imperative.

We are also extremely disheartened that, once again, OPS leadership has moved forward with a major change in operations without seeking input from OEA members – classroom teachers, support professionals and other school staff. No educators or staff were consulted during the decision-making process that led to this "plan" to begin a return to normal – there was zero collaboration.

Our opinion is that the best route for OPS to follow is one of coordination and collaboration: coordination with the governor and Health and Human Services in getting Omaha educators and staff vaccinated, and collaboration with OPS educators and staff on a managed and careful return to some kind of normalcy.

OEA members, understand this: we will diligently and constantly work toward that end until those goals are met.

Thank you for your work and for your membership in the OEA.

Sincerely,

Robert Miller
OEA President

- Social distance is a concern for 5 Days a Week instruction and OEA is asking ALL members to complete a survey on the number of students in your class and the square footage. If you teach in multiple rooms during the day, you will fill the survey out for each different group of students you teach. You will have until Friday, January 15th at noon to fill this out. Please [CLICK HERE](#) for survey.
 - [CLICK HERE](#) to view the press release.
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